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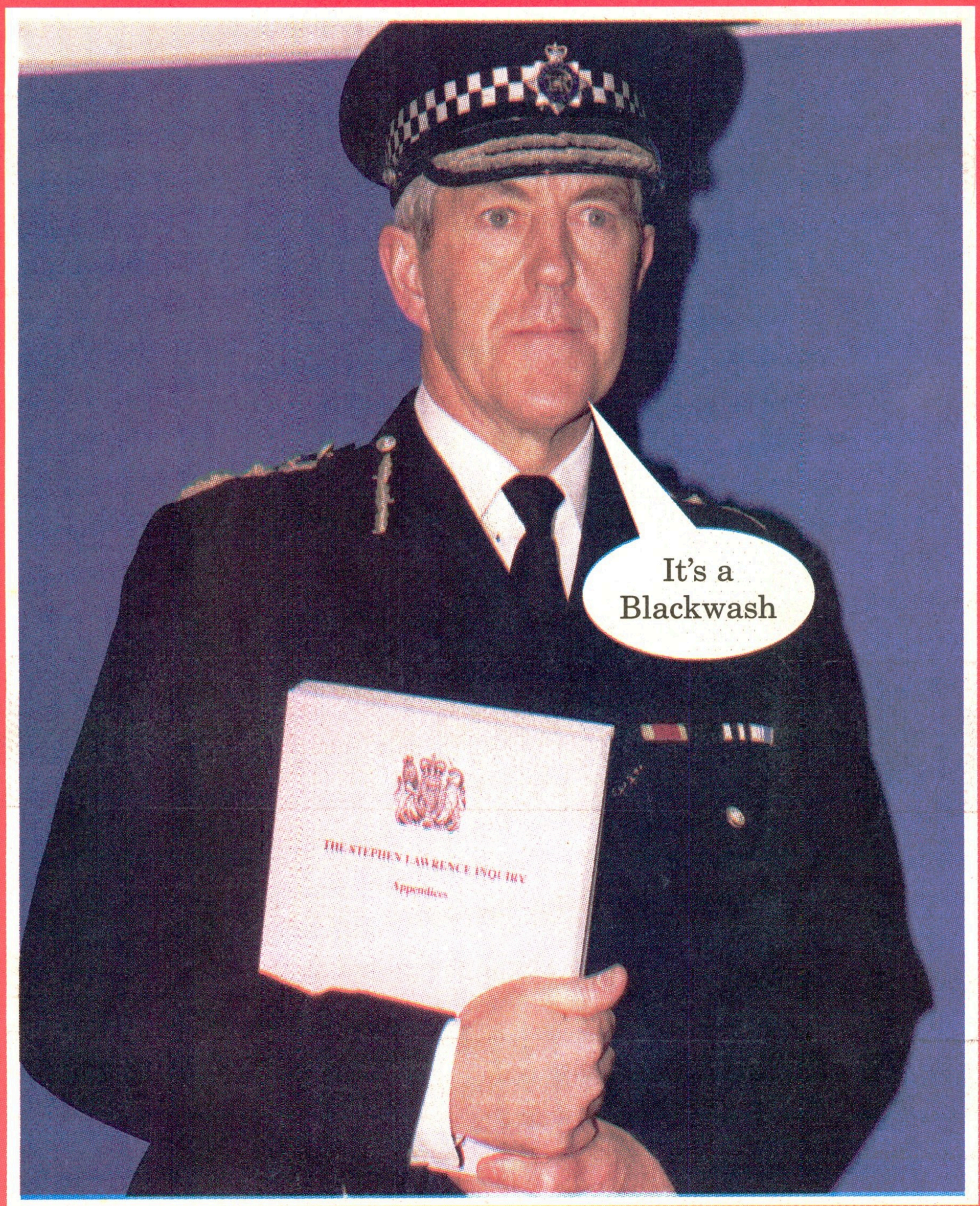

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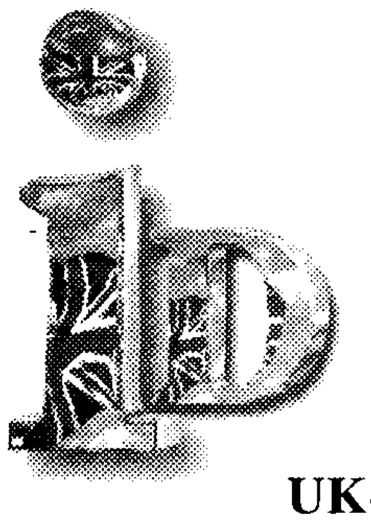

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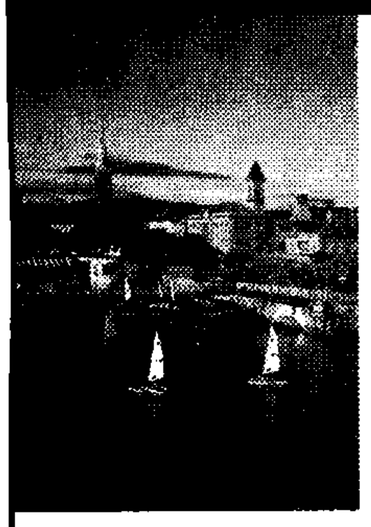

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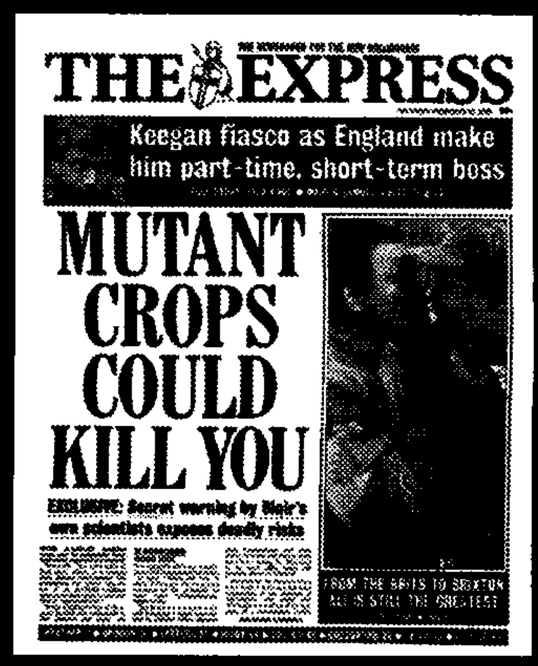
...ne national press ... have got stuck in. Late last year The Express started a campaign against genetically modified crops which has gathered momentum since Christmas and been followed by the Daily Mail, The Mirror, The Guardian and The Independent. Allegations of cosy relationships between the government and life sciences

FT February 20 1999

No Express. No comment.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THE EXPRESS

FULL SPEED AHEAD

Gnome

WE WOULD like unreservedly to apologise to Sir William Macpherson of Cluny for inadvertently publishing his address last week as part of our inquiry into the "institutional uselessness" of the British judiciary.

The address was reported as follows:

Sir William Macpherson of Luny, Newton Castle, Blairgowrie, Perthshire.

We can offer no excuse for this oversight and we acknowledge that now everyone will know where this silly old judge lives.

As a result, he may never again wish to head another public inquiry with incalculable consequences for the rule of law and British justice.

Once again, we must apologise for any distress that this grave dereliction of our duty (which was not our fault, but the fault of society as a whole) may have caused Sir William.

E. Strobes
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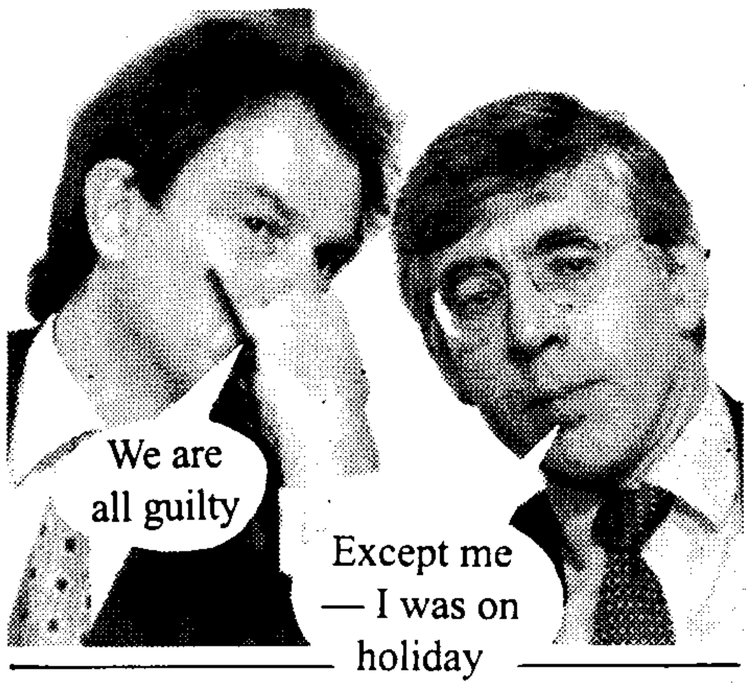
LAWRENCE REPORT



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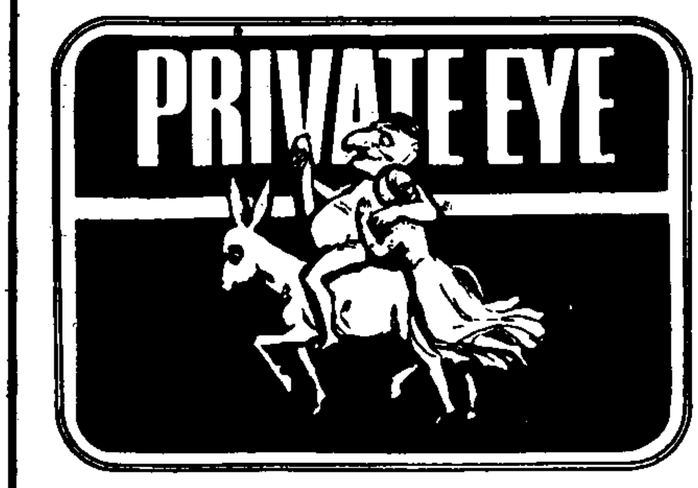


COLOUR SECTION

IN THE hundreds of thousands of column inches of guff, sentiment, outrage, guilt and hypocrisy that greeted publication of Sir William Macpherson's report on the death of Stephen Lawrence, a crucial theme has been almost completely ignored. It is the Norris connection.

Underworld boss Clifford Norris, father of David Norris, one of the five suspects of the Lawrence murder, is in prison for drugs and arms offences. While on the run from the police, he still managed to protect his son throughout the first year of the police investigations into the Lawrence murder.

He bribed a witness to drop attempted murder charges his son faced in another stabbing.

When that case still went ahead, there were reports of attempts to nobble the jury: the foreman knew the verdict of the case before the judge had even summed up. After the case, the foreman offered young Norris a job.

Clifford Norris was in close touch with a senior flying squad officer who acted as an escort witness in the Lawrence case. Yet neither Norris senior nor this officer was called to give evidence to the Macpherson inquiry.

Members completely exonerate the Metropolitan police of any corruption or collusion in the Norris affair. But they do so almost exclusively on the word of police officers and without calling at least *five* vital witnesses.

● ***For the full story see FUNDAMENTAL FAILURE, pages 6 and 7.***

MORE on police sergeant Gurpal Virdi of the Metropolitan police who helped clear up a racist stabbing in his area and complained when it was not properly registered as a racial incident.

On 15 April last year Sgt Virdi was arrested on absurd and trumped-up charges alleging his own racist activity, released on police bail and suspended. He has been trying to get back on duty ever since. Now he hears he will not be prosecuted for anything, but is still suspended pending disciplinary charges.

Asked by Peter Bottomley MP about the case on 4 February, soon after the *Eye* reported it, Kate Hoey, minister for the Met, said it was an "operational matter" which was "under investigation" and so she could not "comment further".

Now charges have at last been dropped, perhaps she, or Sir Paul Condon, will have something to say about how and why a conscientious police officer is being kept off work on full pay for nearly a year after he complained about his colleagues' downgrading of a near-fatal racist stabbing.

SIR Herman Ousely, chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality, is an expert on institutional racialism and his views on the subject have been widely aired during the Stephen Lawrence controversy.

A historical example of institutional racialism not often referred to by Sir Herman was the state of affairs in the London borough of Lambeth in the early 1990s. In 1992, for instance, a council computer operator, B.C. D'Souza, took five cases to a tribunal in which he alleged that he had been the victim of systematic racial stereotyping and abuse and had been sacked because he was black.

The tribunal upheld his claims and concluded: "We feel that the respondent, a local authority, has acted in an oppressive manner and also with a view to profit... It has also to be noted that the respondent is under statutory duty to ensure that it does not act in a racially discriminatory way" (see *Eye* 833).

In the three years 1990-1993 seven allegations of racial discrimination by Lambeth council were upheld at tribunals.

In 1993 Lambeth's chief executive from 1990-1993 left for a new job — chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality. He was knighted in 1997. His name? Sir Herman Ouseley.

THE liberal family background of Metropolitan police commissioner Sir Paul Condon, which has turned so many not-so-liberal police officers against him, is charmingly illustrated by an incident at a mass anti-Vietnam war demonstration in Grosvenor Square in 1968, the year after Sir Paul joined the Met.

Among the demonstrators was Sir Paul's brother Richard, who passionately opposed the war. There was a substantial police presence in the square and at one stage Richard Condon's companions were horrified to see a long arm of the law clamped on Richard's shoulder. "What the hell are you doing here?" growled the police officer. "I'd keep out of trouble if I was you."

"What was that about?" asked young Condon's comrades. The young man blushed as he confessed: "Well, actually, that was my brother."

THE Keystone Kops antics of Merseyside police continue to astonish the citizens of Liverpool.

One day last month a man impersonating a police officer managed to enter four local police stations and the police HQ before being rumbled. He even arrested a woman for shoplifting and booked her in for fingerprinting. When the bogus bobby was finally discovered, it transpired he had been walking the streets equipped with handcuffs, a baton, police radio and CS spray.

Meanwhile one recent outcome of the BBC2 fly-on-the-wall series about the force *Mersey Blues* — not mentioned on air — was the allegation that major drug dealers had an informant with access to the former chief constable's office. Is this true? Merseyside's new chief, Norman Bettison, has said he is satisfied that there is "no widespread corruption" on his patch. He has only been in the job three months, however.

● *Brussels Sprouts: Talking CAP* **7**
● *Hackwatch: Humbug and the Daily Mail* **11**
● *Focus on Branson's pickle: Signal Failures* **12**
● *Roy of the Fuggers cartoon strip* **21**
● *Germaine Greer's Diary* **24**
● *Brighton Bitch Memoir: Burchill's latest* **25**
● *Biwater of Babylon: Footnotes* **26**
● *Archer & Son: In The City* **28**

"What can you do apart from go 'Bong'?"

MACPHERSON'S 'FUNDAMENTAL FAILURE'

THE central theme of Sir William Macpherson's sustained attack on the police teams who investigated Stephen Lawrence's murder is the police failure to arrest the suspects as soon as their names became known. This is described again and again in the report as "the fundamental and fatal error". Yet, incredibly, the rambling, ill-written report has no index or chronology. And the full force of that "fundamental failure" can only be properly understood from the following sequence of events in 1993.

CALENDAR OF COCK-UPS

April 22

Approx 10.30pm: Stephen Lawrence murdered by a racist gang as he waits at a bus stop.

Around midnight: PC Hodges, guarding the cordon round the spot where Stephen died, sees "an old-style red Vauxhall Astra car, occupied by five white youths, approach the scene". The car slows down by the cordoned area. The occupants appear to be laughing.

April 23

1.50pm: An anonymous caller rings Plumstead police station with this message: "A group of youths on the Kidbrooke estate always carry large knives and threaten people. They may have been involved in last night's stabbing. Two of them are Neil Acall (sic) and David Norris."

7.45pm: A young man, described by police as "a skinhead", walks into Plumstead police station and offers information about the murder. The official police note, Message 40, recorded what he had to say: "The persons responsible for the murder of the black youth are Jamie and Neil Acourt of 102 Bournbrook Road SE3 together with David Norris and 2 other males identity unknown. The Acourt brothers call themselves the Krays. In fact you can only join the gang if you stab someone. They carry knives and weapons most days. Also, David Norris stabbed a Stacey Benefield a month ago in order to prove himself."

The man goes on to describe two other stabbings by the Acourts' gang. His message is passed on to Detective Inspector Bullock, second in charge of the murder inquiry. He tells a junior officer to "put it into the system" and the informant leaves the station.

April 24

Two handwritten anonymous messages written by the same person are found in a telephone kiosk and under the windscreen wiper of a police car. Both name James and Neil Acourt, David Norris and Gary Dobson as the young men responsible for "last night's stabbing".

In the afternoon the skinhead responsible for Message 40 is interviewed by Sgt John Davidson of the murder inquiry team. The informant repeats his story exactly. No note is taken and he is sent on his way.

Two police officers visit 102 Bournbrook Road as part of a house to house search. The Acourts' mother gives the name of another youth who visited her house late on the murder night — Luke Knight.

Detective Chief Supt Ian Crampton, the officer in charge of the inquiry, decides not to make any arrests. He does not enter his decision in his policy log.

April 25

A full statement is taken from Stacey Benefield, a white youth. He says that a few weeks earlier, in March, he had been seriously stabbed by David Norris. He had been taken to hospital, but had not reported the name of the stabber because he was frightened for his life. This statement is later confirmed by a friend of Benefield's who saw the Benefield stabbing, Matthew Farman.

Surveillance of the Acourts' house is ordered. A policeman sees a young white man leaving the house with a bin liner which seems to be full of clothes. No photograph can be taken because the "surveillance team" don't have a camera.

April 26

DCS Brian Weeden takes over from DCS Crampton as head of the Lawrence murder inquiry. The surveillance can't be continued that day because the team has been booked to watch the house of a black youth suspected of a minor theft.

April 27

Surveillance continues. David Norris's luxurious home in Chislehurst is surveyed for two hours that day and the next. Nothing unusual is seen. Gary Dobson's house is not watched at all. Nor is Luke Knight's. There is a watch on the Acourts' house for two hours only, during which, once again, a white youth is seen leaving with a full bin liner. He is photographed but can't be followed because the surveillance team can't communicate with the murder headquarters.

April 29

The murder inquiry is informed that there are only 28 Astras in the country with a registration number similar to that clocked at the scene of the murder on the night it happened. No action is taken to track them down. DCS Weeden classes this matter as "non-priority and no further inquiries to be made at this time".

April 30

By sheer chance the Astra at the murder scene is stopped by a police officer. He takes the name of the driver and passenger, and passes it to the murder inquiry. For six weeks, no action is taken to follow up the names.

May 6

Nelson Mandela, president of South Africa, meets Stephen Lawrence's parents in a blaze of publicity.

5.30pm: DCS Weeden at last decides to arrest the suspects. At a team meeting that afternoon, police are reminded of a further piece of information from the skinhead informant. "The Acourts are fascinated by knives. Tried to buy one. Usually hide them under the floorboards." The houses of all the suspects are raided and searched. No one looks under any floorboards.

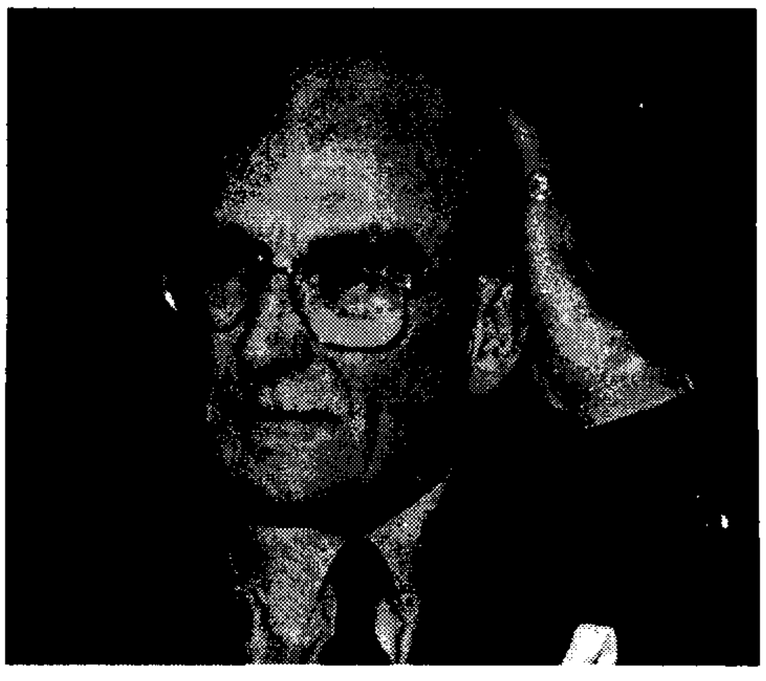
May 7

Jamie Acourt put on identification parade before two witnesses who were at the bus stop when Stephen Lawrence was killed. One of the witnesses hears his name called out in front of the parade and, fearing for his safety, he says he will never again attend a parade.

May 13

Another ID parade. The other witness from the bus stop is kept waiting for six hours and leaves. Neil Acourt is identified by Duwayne Brooks, who was with Stephen when he was killed; and is charged with Stephen's murder. In the same parade, later in the day, David Norris is identified by Stacey Benefield and Matthew Farman as *his* assailant and is later charged with Benefield's attempted murder.

"Witness K" tells police he visited the Acourts' house on the night of the murder. All five suspects were there and one of them was stripped to the waist with his T-shirt off.



Sir William Macpherson

May 17

"Witness K" at last makes a statement.

June 3

Luke Knight identified by Brooks and charged with Stephen's murder.

June 8

Three young men in the Red Astra car seen at the scene of the murder at last interviewed. All three had convictions for racist violence and were involved in the racist attack which led to the death of a young black man, Rolan Adams, in the same area in 1991. They said they had driven past the scene of Stephen Lawrence's murder "by coincidence". Two of them said there were three people in the car. The other said there were five. No effort was made by any police to explore this rather relevant inconsistency.

June 12

Stacey Benefield tells police that he and Matthew Farman had been approached by a Raymond Dewar who asked them to go and see a man who "wished to see things right". Benefield later met Clifford Norris, father of David, in Eltham Park. Norris senior gave Benefield £2,000 not to pursue the charges against his son. "This is how I sort people out by not shooting them," he explained.

June 19

Raymond Dewar arrested and charged with perverting the course of justice.

July 28

CPS announces decision to drop the prosecution of Neil Acourt and Luke Knight for Stephen's murder.

November 15

David Norris tried at Old Bailey for attempted murder of Stacey Benefield.

November 16

In the lunch break, before the judge sums up, the foreman of the jury tells one of Norris's prison escorts that Norris will be acquitted.

November 17

CPS and police request that the juror in question is discharged. The juror is *not* discharged. David Norris is acquitted and released. The foreman of the jury who, it later emerged, was facing a charge of dishonestly handling a £23,000 cheque, again approaches David Norris's escort and asks for the young hooligan's address so he can offer him a job.

December 9

Trial of Dewar for perversion of the course of justice. Dewar acquitted.

THE NORRIS CONNECTION

AS the above chronology makes clear, the position at the end of 1993 was that none of the suspects who had been named so promptly, nor anyone else, was being charged with Stephen Lawrence's murder.

One suspect, David Norris, had been charged with another stabbing. His father Clifford, who was on the run on drugs charges, had tried to bribe a witness to drop an attempted murder charge against his son. When he failed and the trial went ahead, there was a suggestion that the jury was nobbled. No one reading the above account could help at least speculating that the Norris family had some peculiar hold over the entire course of the police investigation.

Sir William Macpherson and his three colleagues who presided over the recent inquiry refer again and again in their report to the "evil influence", in the months after the murder, of the drug and arms dealer Clifford Norris. "Young and impressionable witnesses on and around the Brook estate were holding back because of their fear or apprehension of the Norris family," they declare (8.12).

They are amazed at the failure of the police to arrest Norris in the whole of that first year, 1993. "Even with the knowledge that the evil influence of Clifford Norris was at work, the first investigation team failed to seek him out. Positive efforts should have been made to remove Clifford Norris because of his obviously malign influence. It is inexplicable that more was not done until the summer of 1994 to arrest Clifford Norris, particularly after the Benefield

bribery was uncovered" (8.13). (In the summer of 1994 an entirely new police team started operations by arresting and charging Clifford Norris. They tracked him down quite easily to some oasthouses in Kent. He got eight years). In its conclusion the team again describes the failure to arrest Clifford Norris as "unexplained and incomprehensible" (46.12).

These adjectives are absurd. A highly comprehensible explanation for the police tolerance of Clifford Norris was repeatedly urged on the inquiry by the representatives of Doreen and Neville Lawrence, Stephen's parents. This was that the "evil influence" of Clifford Norris and his gangster associates did not stop at young and impressionable witnesses, nor at Stacey Benefield nor even at juries. It carried over into the police force.

This charge, usually referred to as "collusion" or "corruption", was firmly rejected by the inquiry. The team members were amazed and astonished at the long saga of incompetence which allowed the five suspects, so quickly identified, to escape arrest, dispense with vital evidence, like clothes and weapons, and intimidate witnesses. They were shocked by the brooding presence of the evil genius Clifford Norris, and horrified by the failure to remove him from the scene. After rejecting the collusion charge, however, all this was "inexplicable" and had to be vaguely blamed on poor old bumbling Inspector Knacker and his institutional racism. The very suggestion that wealthy gangsters were encouraging their youth to racist violence and then using their influence to protect them from the law was anathema.

And here is the central contradiction. On the incompetence and racialism of the Metropolitan police, especially in the lower ranks, the inquiry was uncompromising. The crass conclusion of the original inquiry team from Kent police — that there was no evidence of racism in any of the Met officers — was swept away by a tidal wave of evidence.

The charges of "corruption" and "collusion", however, were treated in a totally different manner. The inquiry members admitted applying a different criterion. "The standard of proof (of corruption and collusion)," they insist, "must be the criminal standard... we can only reach a conclusion adverse to the police or individual officers if we are satisfied beyond reasonable doubt... in other areas of the case we are entitled to reach conclusions based upon a balance of probability" (8.5).

This distinction, blandly asserted without authority or even argument (is it really more permissible to call a man a bungling racist than to call him corrupt?) set the whole course of the inquiry. A wall was set up between information about police racism or incompetence (fair game) and police corruption or collusion (confidential).

HE WOULDN'T GIVE AN XX

On 19 May last year Edmund Lawson QC, counsel to the inquiry, vigorously defended himself against any charge of suppressing information about Clifford Norris. "If anything should come to our notice to suggest that there was any connection between Clifford Norris and any police officer, we would procure [sic] that that information was disclosed. Thus far it has not come to our notice despite our looking at a great many documents, but if it did it would be disclosed."

Whoops! Crucial information of the type which he said had not come to his attention had been sitting on his desk for a week. The following day he apologised to everyone for overlooking it. It was a police complaints report about a Customs investigation into drug-running by Clifford Norris which revealed that on at least four occasions Customs officers had seen Norris with a senior flying squad officer in the Metropolitan police, and had photographed the officer receiving packages from the gangster.

Who was this officer? We could not know. He was referred to as XX. For a long time the inquiry was told he had nothing whatever to do with the Lawrence investigations. But then it emerged that when facing disciplinary charges for his meetings with Norris, he had been given a glowing reference by DCS Crampton, though the inquiry believed the Chief Superintendent when he said he had no idea of the connection between XX and Norris. Moreover, he had been appointed as escort officer to Stephen's fellow victim, the eye-witness to the murder, Duwayne Brooks, during the private prosecution launched by the Lawrence family in 1996.

The Macpherson inquiry dealt with the XX affair as it did with all the allegations of corruption or collusion. They heard evidence from senior police

*"We're not **all** racists — some of us are incompetent and corrupt"*

officers, privately read some intelligence papers and then roundly upheld the officers as witnesses of truth. The inquiry relied for its research on the treasury solicitor's office, a government department whose staff have little experience in detailed investigations of this kind. The enormous fact-finding work, interviews, trawls through bank statements, advertisements for information and so forth which were necessary to prove a complete lack of collusion between Norris and the police were far too onerous for the inquiry team. They could, and perhaps should, have abandoned the subject altogether and passed it back to the home secretary or another tribunal. What they did was blandly to "form a view" that the police were all completely clean.

There was the same double standard in the disclosure of information. "No party can justifiably complain that it has been denied full access to relevant material or representation in order to make its views known," say the inquiry members at the outset (2.14). That assurance needs to be tested against the continual complaints from the Lawrences' and Duwayne Brooks's lawyers about lack of disclosure and the long list of vital witnesses who were *not* called to give evidence.

THE SILENT WITNESSES

● *Where (and who?) was "James Grant", the skinhead informant who named three of the suspects the day after the murder?* He told Kent police he had given the name of his source to the police as soon as he was interviewed. The inquiry members say without a word of proof or even argument that they "believe this is most unlikely" (14.22). At another stage they speculate that "James Grant's source was close to the suspects" (14.19). There was an easy way to test these speculations — by calling "James Grant" himself to give evidence. He had indicated to Kent police he was prepared to give evidence in public. Why was he not called?

● *Where (and who) was Officer XX?* He had claimed at disciplinary hearings that his meetings with Norris were to establish the gangster as an informer. Was that on his own initiative or under orders and, if so, whose orders? How close was he to Norris and what was in those packages? Had he met Norris socially, perhaps in the company of other police officers? All these were vital questions, yet XX never appeared for cross-examination by the Lawrence family lawyers. Why? And where for that matter was the officer who appointed him as escort to Duwayne Brooks? He has a lot to answer for. Why wasn't he called?

● *Where was Witness B, who said he saw the Acourts from the top of a bus running away from the murder scene?* His evidence is scoffed at in the report, but he was never asked to give it to the inquiry though he offered to do so.

● *Where was Witness K? Did he really vanish and, if so, why? Where was the juror who knew the verdict in the Benefield case before the judge's summing up and then offered to employ young Norris? Where were Stacey Benefield and Martin Farman? Where was Raymond Dewar, who must know a lot about Clifford Norris? Where, above all, was Clifford Norris himself?* He was easy to find because he was in prison. He was not protected from questions about the murder, as his son was. Why was Norris not called to be asked how many policemen he has met socially in his long career, and how many have tried to register him as an informant? Why were all these vital witnesses withheld from the public hearings?

Until these questions and many others like them are answered, the sections in the Macpherson report about collusion and corruption are — how shall we put it? — inexplicable and incomprehensible.

BRUSSELS SPROUTS

THE European commission is "restructuring" European funding to pave the way for new members from eastern Europe without addressing the real issue: protecting the money from the usual fraud, corruption, mismanagement and profligate spending.

Auditors in Luxembourg fear that plans to simplify the common agricultural policy (CAP) will make it even easier for cheats to run off with what over the last 10 years has amounted to nearly the entire present EU budget of £60bn.

No doubt by the time Hungary, Poland, Estonia, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Romania, Latvia, Lithuania and Slovakia join the gravy train, the EU will be another £60bn poorer. But at the latest round of talks to reduce farm spending, even Gerhard Schröder, chancellor of Germany, the EU's largest contributor and current EU president, agreed it was "absurd" to try to recover billions of marks overnight, especially with the prospect of losing 30,000 Bavarian farms.

The EU's nine million farmers produce approximately a third less than other EU workers and the £30bn CAP budget strains EU resources to the limit. Does the CAP help the population at large? A National Consumer Council estimate in 1995 said EU prices were 70 percent higher than world markets, raising family bills by £20 a week.

Added to low productivity is fraud involving moving olive trees, unsmokeable tobacco and overquoted sheep — estimated at around 10 percent of the agricultural budget or £3bn. When in 1992 Eurocrats tried to overcome fraud by counting every cow, sheep and pig in the EU, MEP Jean Claude Martinez said: "When I read this report I had the impression I was having a nightmare." But the nightmare continues. Figures from the EU budget of 1997 already show a total discrepancy in repayments and receipts, with Germany, Holland and the UK providing 85 percent of the funds and Spain, Greece and Portugal receiving 89 percent of net spending.

By the time the proposed new eastern European partners join, they will already have a huge trade deficit with the EU. We will have a commission which is still unaccountable and wasting trillions of ecus, while the euro will be controlled by a European Central Bank whose president has decided that minutes of bank meetings will be kept secret for the next 17 years.

Nightmares of interlinking gravy trains streaming on to the Ukraine loom, like the ones that MEP had when counting sheep.

GREENSLEAZE

MONSANTO's rival in the genetically modified food business Zeneca, maker of long life tomatoes, seems to be trying to catch up on the domestic front.

Last month Friends of the Earth compiled a chart of England's "50 filthiest factories" from Environment Agency figures for 1996. Zeneca featured twice. Its plant in Thornton Cleveleys was 19th in the table, spewing out 39 tonnes of cancerous chemicals into the surrounding area. But even more impressive was the Zeneca plant in eighth position billowing a massive 276 tonnes of carcinogens over the Huddersfield area.

Not great PR for the trade, which is currently talking up its environmental credentials and its ability to save the third world through longer lasting crisis resistant food crops. The industry probably wouldn't appreciate the public being reminded that one of the first GM crops to be marketed in 1983 was longer lasting, stay fresh, weed resistant, er, tobacco.

GREENPEACE, the environmental pressure group that wants a ban on GM foods, has launced a biodegradable credit card with the Co-op Bank.

Made from a sugar-based polymer called Biopol, it decomposes when put on a compost heap. Greenpeace members may be less pleased to learn, however, that Biopol is made by... the Frankenstein food people Monsanto, who are researching ways Biopol can be produced in greater quantity from GM sugar cane and maize.

Street Of Shame

IN last week's *Mail on Sunday* Stewart Steven (*Who he? Ed*) joined the chorus of columnists pointing out that some of their best friends are black. But his empathy with the Lawrence family did not stop there.

"When black friends tell me of the casual insolence of so many in the public services, I know exactly what they mean. I also know from personal experience a little about abuse of power, and the cack-handed, utterly unsatisfactory nature of the police complaints procedure."

For just as Neville and Doreen Lawrence lost their son and watched his murderers walk free, so Stewart Steven was, er, arrested for sounding his car horn while in a stationary vehicle and, would you believe it, convicted in court.

In the face of such a blatant injustice it can only be a matter of time before a public inquiry is announced.

"THE same old story: racism, bungling, incompetence," read the front page of *The Indescribablyselfrighteous* on the day the Lawrence report appendices story broke.

"Hundreds of copies of the Lawrence report have been circulated to representatives of the five suspects, the media, police, race groups and members of the public," the story went on.

The details would have gone rather further too, were it not for the fortunate eleventh hour realisation that the paper was about to go to press with a reproduction of part of the offending appendices on the front page — without the names and addresses blocked out.

THERE has been some serious liberal hand-wringing at the *Grauniad* this week as the hacks try to make a decision about their local pub, the Coach and Horses.

As the Lawrence report appeared and the newspaper's leader columns took on a more amd more sanctimonious tone about racism, one Asian journalist felt a bit irritated. He was still angry about an incident three years previously where he had been in the pub and heard the landlord making what he claimed were racist comments.

He had complained to fellow hacks at the time but nothing had happened. He had given up drinking there but few of his colleagues had followed his example. Now, however, the NUJ chapel decided that it had to take some action and in an anguished meeting finally voted to boycott the pub. Shortly after taking this high-minded decision, a number of the hacks began to feel that they had not really given the landlord a chance to defend himself and in fact had acted as "something of a kangaroo court".

More guilty self-analysis followed and the result is still not clear. Will the hacks carry on drinking at the Coach and Horses? Will there be a miscarriage of justice? What will happen next? It's difficult, this racism business.

THERE was tremendous unpleasantness at the *Daily Mail*, the home of professional backstabbing, when profile writer Rebecca Hardy went to interview Mike Hollingsworth, "celebrity" ex-husband of Anne Diamond (*Who she? Ed.*).

As Hardy was leaving the Associated Newspapers office in Kensington she told the showbusiness editor Alison Boshoff what she was doing. Boshoff, who has always been best of enemies with Hardy, suspected Hardy was empire building and in a fit of pique immediately faxed Hollingsworth regarding the interviewer who was now on her way to see him. She apparently told him that Hardy was a manipulator of quotes and not to be trusted.

What the charming and loyal Boshoff did not count on, however, was that a bewildered Hollingsworth would show the fax to Hardy as soon as she arrived at his office with her notebook. So much for femail (*sic*) solidarity at Northcliffe House.

"*MAIL* leads the way in banning paparazzi pictures" was the headline in the wake of the death of Princess Diana. And infamous photographer Jason Fraser topped the hate list at Associated Newspapers, having hounded the princess for years to obtain those intrusive, hurtful pictures that the papers always, er, happily splashed all over their front pages.

Surely this cannot be the same Jason Fraser who has recently been heard telling staff at the *Mail on Sunday* that their editor, Peter Wright, is "a bit stupid, but he will do anything I tell him"?

WHAT do freelance journalists do if they discover that a magazine has a policy of deliberately delaying payments for as long as possible? Contact *UK Press Gazette*, "the weekly for all journalists", of course. But what if the magazine in question is *Press Gazette* itself?

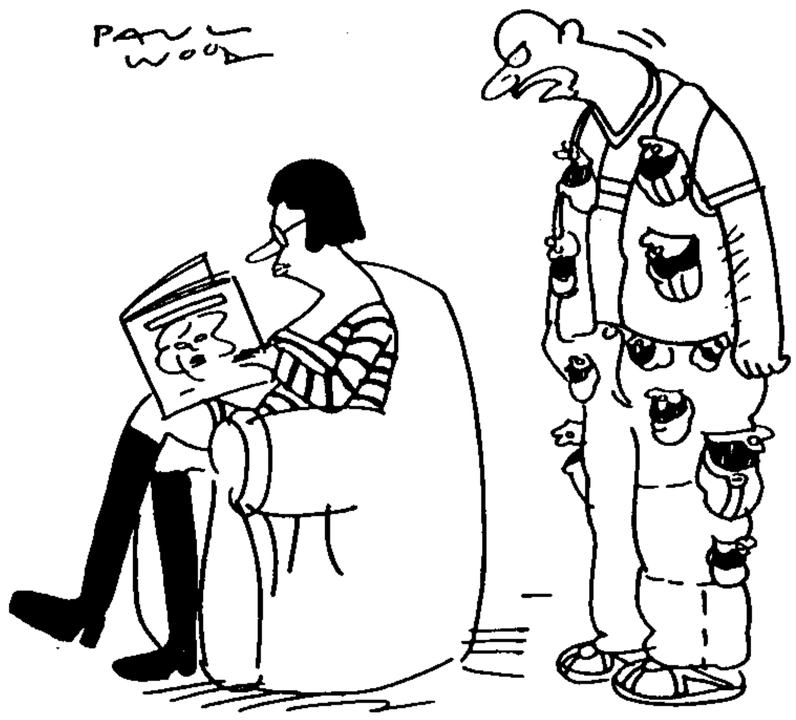
In a secret memo to editor Philippa Kennedy, proprietor Richard Flaye — founder and md of Quantum Publishing — confirms what freelances have suspected for some time. Because the company has "about £1.5 million more than usual tied up in debt", he writes, "we have no option but to be slow in paying our suppliers" — including suppliers of copy. "Please do inform your publisher when something really must be paid but otherwise please bear with accounts as we resolve this."

Kennedy has been asked to pass the message on to her senior colleagues "in an appropriate low-key way". There is little sign of belt-tightening from Flaye himself, however. He owns a French chateau and spent Christmas and new year on an extended jaunt to Australia.

THE peace and tranquillity of Hampton Court palace was rudely disrupted recently by the arrival of fog horn-voiced *Observer* hack John Sweeney.

The off duty *What The Papers Say* Journalist of the Year (*shome mishtake, shurely?*) irrationally became convinced that the huge open log fire in the kitchens was in fact a gas-fired fake — a view he proceeded to air to anyone within earshot (ie, to those within a quarter mile radius).

As Sweeney's bellowings reverberated through the ancient corridors — causing nervous tourists to edge away and frightened children to seek their parents — a palace guard stepped forward and politely pointed out that it was his job each morning to light the aforementioned real fire.



"Have you been going through my pockets again?"

MORE evidence in this week's *Observer* of news editor Andy "Baloney" Malone's grip on the news.

The serious injuries suffered by Channel 4 News presenter Sheena McDonald late on Saturday night when she was knocked down by a speeding police van warranted a mention in the "News in Brief" section — beneath a picture of her ex-boyfriend, Chancellor Gordon Brown holding hands with his new girlfriend Sarah Macauley.

SO farewell then, James Brown, editor of *GQ* and the man whose pioneering Brit-lad journalism led him to compare celebrities to popular brands of biscuits, put naked models in blood-filled baths and remind us all how stylish the Nazis were.

The warning signs came early on when Brown lobbed a bottle through a Vogue House window after a drunken brawl with *Observer* journalist Barbara Ellen (*Eyes passim*), but Brown was Jonathan Newhouse's prodigy.

The nerdish Newhouse is Si's cousin and chairman of Conde Nast International. He cut his teeth overseeing the closure in France of *Glamour*, *Maison et Jardin* and *Vogue Homme* — no surprise he spotted Brown's potential, then. Newhouse was so impressed by Brown he even dashed down once to show off his Yakuza tattoo after *GQ* ran a piece about Japanese gangsters.

Conde Nast's effervescent chairman Nicholas Coleridge was left out in the cold. As *GQ*'s sales faltered (despite an estimated £600,000 spent on promotion) he was unable to exert any influence. Brown was Newhouse's boy. How timely, then, that Brown's tribute to Nazi style slipped through and that no one thought how much it would offend the Jewish Newhouses. The words "rope" and "long enough to" spring to mind.

Certainly Coleridge's *savoir faire* was restored enough for him to issue a press release in his usual Orwellian doublespeak. Brown had "resigned" (ie been sacked) and sales were up (ie down). When Brown joined the magazine the ABC was 148,000; now it is just 132,000.

THE departure of actor George Clooney from the American TV series ER is, as any newspaper editor knows, the single most important world event since the publication of Bridget Jones's diary.

The weeping and wailing could be heard all the way down the Street of Shame, the orisons beginning courtesy of Barbara McMahon in the Evening Standard on Friday 19 February.

"Fans could scarcely believe they would never again hear him shout for a chem seven or an IV push, or diagnose a tension pneumothorax as he rescued yet another cute child from the jaws of death," she wrote.

McMahon's tribute appeared on page five of the London evening. And in the next day's Guardian — in the absence of any new records by Oasis — editor Alan Rusbridger cleared the front page for his own Clooney requiem.

"Fans could scarcely believe they would never again hear him shout for a chem seven or an IV push, or diagnose a tension pneumothorax as he rescued another cute child from certain death," wrote media corr Janine Gibson, before continuing with three more paragraphs word for word identical to McMahon's piece the night before.

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON KNIFE & PACKER

THEY'VE TRASHED THE PLACE, JEZ! ISLINGTON'S JUST NOT SAFE ANYMORE
I CAN'T BELIEVE IT! MY STUFF'S ALL OVER THE ROOM!!
THAT'LL TEACH YOU TO GO TO AN UNQUALIFIED FENG SHUI EXPERT
SO TRUE, QUIN

SO Tony Blair got his man in Wales. But at a price. Without the regional union barons — the lumbering dinosaurs Blair has seen fit to castigate ever since his own election as leader by one member, one vote — Alun Michael would be begging for his old job back at the home office.

Labour's members may have voted for Rhodri Morgan in droves, but they reckoned without the steely determination of Labour's Millbank HQ, adamant that Blair could not be seen to lose face and quite prepared to use every dirty trick in the book to ensure that Blair's man got the job. And it was a combination of "useful idiots" in the union hierarchy and possible serious malpractice that enabled Michael to squeeze in over Morgan.

The general secretary of the Welsh Labour party, Anita Gale, had been told that ballot papers would be despatched to party members on 1 February. Yet they were mailed out three days earlier by Unity Balloting Services Ltd, hired by Labour. John Braggins, the Millbank official responsible, neglected to inform Gale and Morgan only discovered this remarkable change of plan following a chance leak from the Michael camp. Amazingly the early despatch of ballot papers to Labour's 20,000 odd members in the principality coincided with the despatch of virtually identical letters from 20 Labour MPs urging their local members to "Get behind Michael".

At the same time as the ballot papers and toadying letters began to land on members' door mats, the *Mirror*'s political editor David "See-less" Seymour helpfully obliged Blair's man by producing a special Welsh edition lauding Michael and urging people to vote for him. Braggins and others were delighted. They knew that most people were likely to vote within a couple of days of receiving their voting papers.

But even with the support of unions such as the T&G and the AEU, which refused to conduct ballots, and the backing of the Millbank machine, the Michael campaign was weak. Unions that did ballot showed a three-to-one backing for Morgan and every opinion poll showed similar degrees of support among the party's membership. Yet as the final week approached Alun Michael began to manage the odd smile or two. Morgan alleges that on the Sunday — a week before the results were announced — Michael's supporters began to talk of the vote in the constituency section going 65 percent to Morgan, 35 percent to Michael. (Morgan had to win 72 percent in order to win out over the union and MPs section and win the contest).

And when the results were announced to a desultory gathering in Cardiff Bay, by some astonishing coincidence Morgan got 65 percent of the members votes to Michael's 35 percent — and, er, lost.

Morgan and the thousands of party members who voted for him are hopping mad. And Morgan has written to Unity Security Balloting Services Ltd, demanding to know when the ballot papers began to be opened. USBS had refused to allow Morgan to send in any scrutinisers to the count claiming that there "was no point as the computer would count the votes in twenty minutes". He also wants to know whether "progress reports" from USBS were leaked or given to Braggins or any other official and handed on to Michael's supporters. But as Morgan attempted to raise these serious questions and many others besides, the young pups in Millbank's press office dismissed him for being, in their words, "pathetic". That's democracy for you, folks!

● USBS Ltd was set-up following Conservative legislation in the 1980s which obliged trade unions to ballot their members on more issues and with greater regularity than they had in the past. To facilitate this growth in democracy, government money was made available to unions and USBS Ltd was set-up to take advantage of the new cash on offer.

Controversy continues to dog USBS with persistent complaints from individual members of trade unions, which have tended to mirror those of Rhodri Morgan. Four big unions including the T&G, Unison and the AEEU have discontinued with the services of the company.

● LEFTWING Labour MP and longtime Scottish devolution campaigner Dennis Canavan fell foul of a "new" Labour scrutiny committee earlier this year after seeking selection as a candidate for the new Scottish parliament.

Canavan's most ferocious interrogator was Dundee MP Ernie Ross, who demanded to know if Canavan had ever been disloyal to the government. Canavan's response — "It depends which government you are talking about" — failed to impress the former hardline leftie Ross and Canavan was inexplicably dumped as a candidate for the upcoming Scottish elections.

How tragic to learn that "on message Ernie" subsequently took his loyalty to "new" Labour too far. Ross has been obliged to resign from the foreign affairs select committee after admitting leaking the committee's highly critical report on the arms to Sierra Leone affair to foreign office ministers.

DESPITE his narrow victory in the battle to become Labour leader in Wales, Alun Michael's future as Tony Blair's vicar across the Severn is insecure.

Thanks to a voting system heavily skewed in his favour, the Welsh secretary nudged 5 percentage points ahead of Rhodri Morgan, the people's choice, much to the dismay of the maverick MP's grassroots supporters.

Before Michael can become "Prime Minister of Wales", however, he has to win a Welsh assembly seat on 6 May. After chickening out of fighting one of the 40 first-past-the-post constituencies, he is relying on a free ride as one of the additional 20 members elected by PR from party lists.

His problem is that the more votes Labour piles up in the straight fights, the less likely its PR choices will come through. As a faithful party man Michael presumably hopes Labour will hold on to the marginal Carmarthen East and Dinefwr seat and take marginal Brecon and Radnorshire too. But if that happens, all Millbank's machinations will turn to dust; only if the two key seats go pear shaped he will slide in.

That's a real dilemma for the fixers. Or is it?

IT MUST be reassuring to be represented in parliament by Frank Cook, Labour MP for Stockton North — a man who really knows what he is doing.

When the division bell rang last month for the free Commons vote on the lowering of the homosexual age of consent, Cookie dashed off into the aye lobby. Fair enough. Except that as chair of the standing committee which will see through the legislation, he should not have voted on the matter.

Furthermore he does not believe in changing the current law. An awkward interview with the deputy speaker, Sir Alan Haselhurst, then ensued, at which it was established that his decision was spot on — well, apart from the fact that he shouldn't have voted; didn't know what he was voting for; and doesn't agree with what he voted for.

"No, listen... It's vital that we continue to pay the Danegeld to ensure that Britain retains her influence at the heart of... er... Denmark"

"This, being the last will and testament of Finley Ketchup Gerbil Ee-By-Gum O'Hara, I being of sound mind..."

THOUGH it is hard to see how the Tories can sink any lower in Wales — they have just a handful of councillors and no MPs — their decision to make Rod "Rottweiler" Richards their leader looks set to be even more disastrous than Labour's stitch-up in favour of Alun Michael (*Eyes passim*).

Having beaten Nick Bourne to the leadership, Richards has taken over the Tory manifesto for the Welsh assembly elections and has made it his own — much to the consternation of the moderates.

Among the irrelevancies he has included is opposition to a single European currency, over which the assembly will have no power anyway. Rod, whose exploits with a lady from the Canine Defence League lost him his ministerial office under John Major, has also gone over the top to attack the "linguistic apartheid" set up to protect the Welsh language, thus causing alarm among Tory candidates in Welsh-speaking areas.

His search for a safe Westminster seat will also upset other Tories in the most Anglicised part of Wales, Monmouth. For though Richards is standing in north Wales for the assembly elections, he has decided that Monmouth in south-east Wales is where he will make a comeback as MP.

'Backbiter'

IN THE TEAROOM

WHY is it that William Hague gets everything arsy-versy? First he climbs into a policy strait-jacket of ten years' opposition to the euro, then, almost two years later he announces a special commission to think up some plausible reasons keeping the pound is a jolly good idea.

And does he announce this wonderful new commission with a press conference so hacks can meet and be impressed by the immensely clever and important people who will sit on it? No, he says he's... er... not quite sure who will be on the commission at the moment but he'll come up with a list of names in about ten days' time.

Could this delay be entirely unrelated to the fact that the wheeze was only conceived five minutes earlier by Conservative central office wonk Danny Finkelstein in response to the news that almost every other clapped out political deadbeat — from David Owen, through Denis Healey to Jim Prior — was getting involved in some sort of new anti-euro "forum", so why should Hague miss out on the action?

Meanwhile poor Francis Maude is being pressured into parroting the line that Britain is being "frog-marched" into the single currency (he said it six times in the course of a three-minute interview last week). Tory spin-doctors have been busy congratulating themselves on this phrase which they believe operates on a "subliminal level" with *Sun* readers.

But Maude is increasingly tempted to say "hop off you spin-doctors" as his big business friends seek to persuade him to position himself as a Mr Flexible leadership candidate in advance of the Hague bandwagon finally swerving into the ditch after the party's inevitable pisspoor performances in the coming European, council and, let's not forget, Scottish elections. With the same scenario in mind cold-eyed Portillistas are praying for a death in a safe seat so they can squeak their contender in through a by-election. If the grim reaper fails to come up with a vacancy, who knows, maybe someone's half-forgotten sexual indiscretion will catch up with him? Dirtier things have happened.

'Urquhart'

TV

Births, Marriages and Deaths (BBC2)
Queer As Folk (C4)
Vanessa (BBC1)

THE big spring dramas were launched last week on the upmarket channels and, true to the old saying about where thoughts turn during this season, both concern intimate relationships.

Births, Marriages and Deaths (BBC2) is a four-parter by Tony Grounds, who wrote the award-winning weepie *Our Boy*, and is what is known in the trade as "knowing". This is a technical term for the fact that most of the ideas have previously been had by someone else.

The title, at one level simply descriptive of the plot but also with cleverly ominous implications, learns a trick from the movie that made Hugh Grant famous. The incidental music and camerawork were originally the copyright of Quentin Tarantino. The leading actors — Ray Winstone, Phil Davis, Mark Strong, Maggie O'Neill — have previously appeared in big working-class dramas by another writer.

Admittedly, *Births, Marriages and Deaths* was publicised as having one important distinction from other landmark television dramas. Unlike *Our Friends In The North* and *Holding On* — which drew their storylines from big contemporary news stories — *Births, Marriages and Deaths* was billed as dealing with the everyday domestic, focusing on the marriages and working lives of three former schoolmates.

This was a credible ambition — television drama ought to aspire to the tradition of the novel as much as to newspapers — and is often delivered in the scripts and acting. Irritatingly, though, episode one rapidly loses faith with the everyday and sets up two lurid secrets for the men to share. The serial might avoid politics, but it still can't resist melodrama. It's a revealing admission of the fact that no drama, from soap to showpiece dramas like this or Jimmy McGovern's *The Lakes*, now feels safe without some element of the lurid.

Queer As Folk (Channel 4), for example, does deal entirely with relationships but, in television terms, is as far from the everyday as possible. This is the first mainstream drama series in which all of the characters — as opposed to the occasional motorcycle courier or a lawyer — are gay.

Having already broken this convention of television drama, the series, written by Russell T. Davies, challenges two more. First, this is the most explicit sex ever seen on British television.

For example, a man's tongue is seen at one point nuzzling between the buttocks of a 15 year old boy.

Channel 4 exec Gub Neal has said that the newspaper and phone-line outrage would not have happened if the sex had been heterosexual but he is simply wrong. It's true that many of the phone-calls will simply be old soldiers ringing to call for those people to have their bottoms stitched up, but if an equivalently candid sequence of cunnilingus featuring a schoolgirl character were ever shown on TV, the reaction would actually have been greater, as no newspaper would feel constrained by fears of accusations of homophobia.

For its other innovation, though, the show deserves congratulation. The pioneering black and feminist dramas on television were usually hobbled by having overly heroic central characters: adverts for the cause. Stuart, the main character in *Queer As Folk*, is one of the most unpleasant characters ever seen on TV: selfish, predatory, cruel. The series may sometimes be childishly sensationalist, but it could not remotely be accused of being propaganda, which is precisely the charge being made by its shrill detractors.

Meanwhile, the scale of the BBC's retreat over **Vanessa** — only a few weeks ago launched as a flagship morning programme — is becoming clear. Last week it was announced that the show would become much shorter and be screened considerably later, therefore no longer competing head-to-head with *Trisha*, the very task for which Feltz was given her lucrative contract.

The real fun, however, was in watching the show in the fortnight immediately after the controversy over fake guests on the programme. Aware that the series was under unusually intense scrutiny from the press, they hit on a classic BBC solution: boring their detractors to death. A programme which had been commissioned and delivered as an emotional freak show would become overnight a worthy public information series.

And so it was that Vanessa — quietly putting aside her briefing notes on men married to triplets who are committing adultery with both their sisters-in-law — found herself running through a useful checklist for parents of early warning signs of meningitis or discussing breast cancer with a survivor. The bemused viewer kept watching in hope of the moment when Feltz would notice looming up on her autocue a link into a discussion on the future of NATO.

Having thus completely altered the content of the show, the BBC then changed the length and timeslot. For all the brave talk of BBC execs in speeches about how confessional talk shows have a place in their schedules if done properly, these moves are an admission that the experiment with this contentious genre is, at least for the moment, over.

'Square Eyes'

MEDIA NEWS

THE pressure on Radio Four controller James Boyle may have eased since RAJAR figures revealed that R4 had won back most of the audience lost in the previous quarter. But pressure on producers to maintain the trend is hotting up with a new "offers round".

The obsession with ratings among commissioning editors is generating a commercial radio culture throughout the network that means programme ideas that would once have walked through the commissioning process are now ditched at the first hurdle.

When ratings slumped following the launch of the new schedule, Boyle blamed pisspoor programme makers. Now the figures are up, it's the schedule, rather than the programmes, that has been seen to triumph: "I am particularly pleased to see that the Radio 4 audience is settling down to the new schedule," announced the director of radio, Jenny Abramsky, in a typically patronising press release that ignored the possibility of an audience appreciating *programmes*.

Commissioning editors are visiting every department to discuss the market findings for every single slot on offer. If producers cannot guarantee high ratings for the slot, their ideas won't get commissioned.

Plugged In

Five Border collies are barking mad about TV's *One Man And His Dog*. The hounds huddle in front of the box whenever the sheepdog show is on. And they love the series so much that owner Josie Bleeze is signing up to Sky TV just so they can keep watching it.

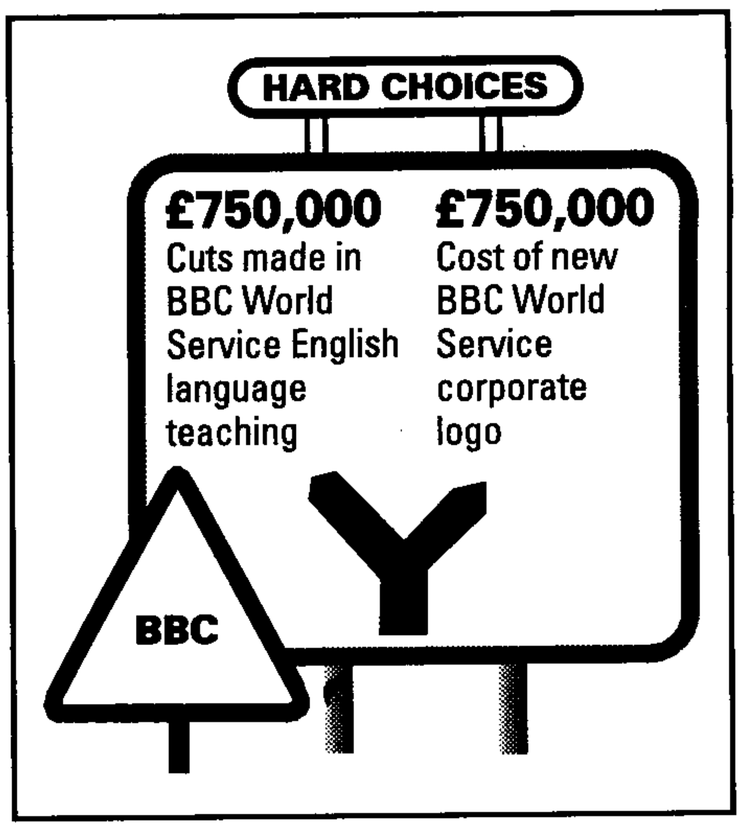
The Sun

An occasional column devoted to cross-media plugs masquerading as news.

THE eagerly-awaited redesign of BBC television news, originally scheduled for 16 May, is already a source of much ugliness at Television Centre. In the past these rebranding exercises were always carried out by the Beeb's own news and current affairs graphics specialists, whose designers have successfully won for TV contracts around the world. This time they weren't even able to bid for the work.

Instead director-general John Birt lunched with Martin Lambie-Nairn, designer of BBC1's balloons, BBC2's "idents", Channel 4's launch logo and the millennium dome brand, and promptly handed him the news contract. All head of news Tony Hall could do was pass on the bad news to the BBC team and reflect on the fact that the only successful in-house resource in his empire, generating enough business to absorb the immense losses incurred elsewhere within news, had just lost a big earner.

Unfortunately the 16 May schedule was a tad inconvenient for "Mr Style". So Birt promptly postponed the launch to give him more time. Not that Lambie-Nairn will have to soil his hands with nitty-gritty design work. He will simply descend from on high with a "concept" that will be "realised" by none other than the BBC's own unsuccessful in-house team.



WRITING in the BBC in-house magazine *Ariel*, the shameless head of the employee services group Douglas Davies sought to calm the growing number of women who want to know why their Well Woman screening service is being withdrawn.

"We are, frankly, concerned about using licence-fee income to pay for a service (albeit valued by some staff) which is now freely and readily provided by the National Health Service," he said, er, forgetting to mention that he and all BBC managers benefit from free BUPA healthcare paid for with licence-fee income.

***ONE Man and His Dog* presenter Robin Page used the BBC's plans to axe his show as an opportunity to launch broadsides at the rest of the corporation's countryside output.**

He complained: "They always take the middle ground and take up both sides of an argument." And he singled out BBC1's *Countryfile* for particular criticism, claiming it was "not watched by serious farmers and gave an urban view of the countryside". Odd that he forgot to mention his own stint as a presenter of *Countryfile* from which he was sacked.

GRANADA is making great claims for the authenticity of its forthcoming two-part television drama *This is Personal*, which deals with West Yorkshire police's hapless investigation into the Yorkshire Ripper murders of the 1970s.

Leeds streets where filming has taken place were even daubed with scene-setting graffiti such as: "Chapeltown says hang the Ripper". But the film does not recreate what was actually painted on a Leeds gable-end next to the police's Ripper incident room in 1977. It was a message which reflected local dissatisfaction that the rozzers who swamped the area for weeks of house-to-house inquiries seemed more concerned with clearing up petty crime than catching the mass murderer. It read: "Fuck off pigs!"

BIRTSPEAK

Head of Knowledge Management
Technology Directorat, Central London

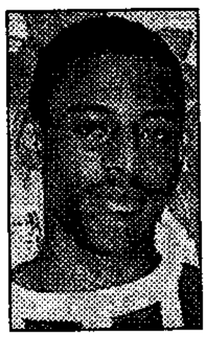
Reporting to the Director of Technology for the BBC this new senior role will be responsible for leading Knowledge Management activities and initiatives across the organisation. You will advise Board of Management on the performance improvements which can be achieved through effective knowledge management, using technology to the full. You will also produce a strategy which reflects the organisational, cultural, process and systems changes which will need to be adopted.

Working with the Directorates you will establish mechanisms which facilitate cross fertilisation of internal skills, knowledge and programme know-how.

— BBC job advertisement

HACKWATCH

The Daily Mail



IN THE wake of the Stephen Lawrence inquiry the *Daily Mail* and its editor Paul Dacre have been particularly pleased with themselves.

"There would have been no Lawrence inquiry, but for the *Mail*'s actions," the paper boasted shortly before Christmas — a controversial view it was more than happy to repeat last week. "Without this newspaper's unprecedented action in naming as murderers the five suspects in the case, there would almost certainly have been no inquiry of the kind conducted by Sir William Macpherson."

Er, so when exactly did the *Daily Mail*, bible of all that is unpleasant in Middle England, become a champion of anti-racism? It seems it might have been at around the time Dacre discovered that Stephen Lawrence's father Neville had once decorated his house. For back in the early 1990s, the Associated Newspapers flagship had rather different priorities.

"The Black and White Minstrels felt distinctly off colour when they performed at a council-run theatre. They had to apologise to their audience after they were asked not to 'black up' because it might be considered racially offensive," fumed the *Mail* under the headline "Minstrels All White On The Night" (29 Jan 92).

This story was characteristic of the paper's traditional and obsessive loathing for "political correctness" and the "race commissars" who promote it. Along with the 248 "stories" highlighted in the paper since then under headlines as diverse as "Boy of five falls foul of race commissars: 'chocolate man' storm (26 Apr 93) or "The truth about life at the floodgates" (an immigration story, 18 May 92), or "Whites hired as cheap labour" (behind the scenes at an Indian restaurant, 14 Feb 92), a catalogue of "think pieces" ram home a familiar message: "*Mail* analysis on white backlash by dockland families who survived the blitz only to feel pushed out by immigrants" (18 Sep 93); "How the race commissars brainwash our social workers; a leading academic attacks the insidious ideology that permeates the social services" (2 Aug 93).

Mail columnists too have sung a similar tune: "The offence of 'racism' is something you make up as you go along — a perfect hunting ground for paranoiacs," pronounced Andrew Alexander on 5 March 1993. "Jeering at Scots and Jews for their supposed meanness is a long-standing tradition of some real value — being able to laugh at each other is an essential part of civilised existence." Ha, ha, ha.

The racist murder of Stephen Lawrence in April 1993 prompted the *Mail* almost at once to condemn the "professional protestors" (including Nelson Mandela) who offered the family support: "All sane people must hope that those guilty of this appalling crime are caught and convicted. And anyone who can help the police should do so. What is not helpful is the gusto with which the more militant of the anti-racist organisations have hijacked this human tragedy," said the paper on 10 May 1993.

A *Daily Mail* reporter at the time, Hal Austin, later told the *Observer* how he had been despatched by Paul Dacre "to write a 'knocking' story" about the family and the support it was attracting (*Observer*, 16 Feb 1997). When he interviewed Stephen's parents, he soon discovered that Neville Lawrence had once worked as a decorator at Dacre's home. Neville Lawrence phoned Dacre to find out what was going on. The following day, said Austin: "I was told by the news desk to forget the previous instructions and that they now wanted a positive story." Two days later, instead of associating the Lawrence family with extremists, the *Mail* set about putting distance between them: "The distraught parents of murdered black teenager Stephen Lawrence yesterday condemned the extremists who say they are making political capital out of his death."

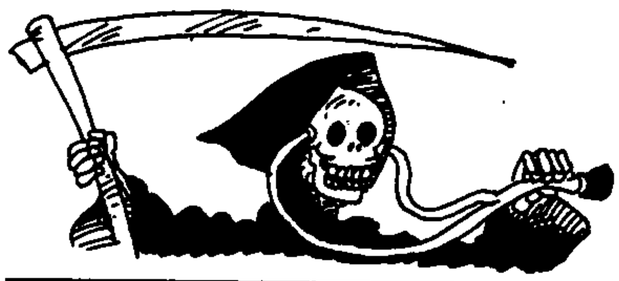
Thus began a conversion of sorts at the paper that culminated in a front page article two years ago naming five white racists as the killers: "Murderers: in no way does this newspaper want to set itself up as an unofficial adjunct to the judicial system... but this was an extraordinary situation and demanded an extraordinary response" (15 Feb 97). An extraordinary response that overruled the law and led directly to Macpherson's inquiry and "an historic race relations revolution" (25 Feb 99) courtesy of Associated Newspapers.

But even as the *Mail* now basks in its own glory, doubts have already started to appear: "If all 70 of his far-reaching recommendations were to be implemented in full they would spark a politically-correct purge across the country and irrevocably change the British way of life," commented the paper on 25 February. Dreaded politically correct McCarthyism could even return: "For Stephen's sake avoid a witch-hunt (24 Feb)... Today sees the publication of the long awaited report of the inquiry into the death of Stephen Lawrence. While it has the potential to do great good, there is also the growing danger that the event will degenerate into an hysterical witch-hunt that will damage the cause of race relations."

The *Mail* had a specific worry: "Sir William proposes, for example, that our homes should no longer be our castles. A private conversation round the dinner table might count as a criminal offence, if racist remarks are passed. Evidently the era of the thought police is upon us" (25 Feb). An odd idea for a newspaper that printed video pictures of the five suspects using racist and violent language in their homes as proof of their appalling crimes. The pictures were covertly taken by real police who "had dressed up as electricity staff to install a miniature camera and microphone in a flat used by the gang" (15 Feb).

Through all of this the *Mail* has in fact preserved the prejudices of the Middle England where most of its readers live. The very day after the Macpherson report came out, the *Mail* attacked "rampant political correctness", "political correctness gone mad" and "politically correct McCarthyism" three times in the same leading article, signalling a prominent return to its old obsessions... "politically correct madness" (15 Jul 98), "political correctness gone mad" (30 Apr 98), "rampant political correctness" (17 Jul 97), "political correctness gone mad" (9 May 97), "rampant political correctness" (10 Apr 97), "political correctness gone mad" (21 Oct 95), "rampant political correctness" (15 Feb 95), "political correctness gone mad" (8 Dec 94) and so on back into the mists of time.

HUSBAND



DOING THE ROUNDS

VICTORY FOR THE *EYE*

THE national media have finally caught up with the scandal exposed in the *Eye* last summer of babies with biliary atresia, a rare liver disease, dying or suffering unnecessary transplant surgery because they weren't treated in specialist liver centres.

The publicity has forced a U-turn by the Royal College of Surgeons, which now says it *is* in favour of designating the Kasai procedure, the life-saving operation these babies need, to specialist centres.

At the moment there are only three such centres in Britain: at King's in London, the Birmingham Children's Hospital and in Leeds. While designation would mean a recommendation that the operation only be performed in such specialist centres, which would receive appropriate funding to do it, designation does *not* alas prevent paediatric surgeons from doing the operation when they lack the specialist training or support team to get good results.

In a 1985 paper in the *British Medical Journal* (*Eye* 958) 16 centres (and 16 surgeons) were doing the operation, with the best centre, King's, getting four times better results than the seven hospitals doing one a year. In 1989 the department of health designated the Kasai to the specialist centres at King's and the Birmingham Children's Hospital, but non-specialists continued to operate and, after taking advice from the Royal College of Surgeons, it was decided to de-designate the procedure. In the latest (1993-1995) survey, 15 hospitals were still doing it and the same depressing fourfold variability existed between specialists and occasional surgeons.

This scandal has many similarities to the so-called Bristol cardiac disaster, exposed in the *Eye* in 1992. Despite detailed evidence that could only have come from a whistleblower, both stories were ignored by the national press until terrestrial TV verified them. The stories themselves also have striking similarities — not least the systematic failure at all levels to provide good quality care for critically ill babies undergoing life-threatening surgery.

In the Bristol case, the department of health has so far escaped censure. But it is now clear it knew form at least 1989, when an audit of heart surgery was completed, that the Bristol unit was treating fewer babies with serious heart disease and getting poorer results. Instead of launching an investigation, it increased funding of the unit.

In neither instance is there proof that surgeons getting poor results have been technically incompetent. In Bristol, for example, the surgeons were found guilty in their decision to keep on operating without adequately establishing the reasons for their poor results.

Indeed, the Kasai operation can fail even at the best centres — but they at least have the expert support team of hepatologists, pathologists, anaesthetists, nurses and nutritionists who can get a baby as fit as possible for liver transplant. At some non-specialist centres, the failed Kasai operations aren't being picked up quickly and the babies die before they have transplants.

Professor Ted Howard, the UK's leading Kasai surgeon, stresses the importance of training. "It is a very complicated operation and to do it well, you need to be operating in and around the liver all the time. You simply can't expect general paediatric surgeons who operate in the liver once a year to get good results."

The current situation is morally indefensible and makes no financial sense. The Kasai operation, done well or badly, costs around £8,000; but if it fails, a liver transplant will cost up to £75,000. Not only is there a national shortage of donor livers, but transplantation is risky. Even at the best centres, 10 to 20 percent of babies die within three years and those who survive have to take life-long immunosuppressive drugs and risk longterm complications of liver rejection.

Only 50 babies a year are born with biliary atresia and there is simply no excuse for not centralising the service to three or four specialist centres. In a press release to the BBC, the department of health admitted that it had known about the anomaly scandal for 14 years. Now, thanks to the *Eye**, it may finally be forced to act.

M.D.

* The story of *Private Eye*'s exposure of both scandals is featured in M.D.'s book, *Trust Me, I'm a Doctor*, published by Metro on 4 March at £9.99. Credit card hotline 0500 418419.

Down On The Fish Farm

A SERIOUS lovers' tiff is set to disrupt the cosy marriage between Scotland's fish farmers and their official regulators, the Scottish office (SO), over the killer fish disease, infectious salmon anaemia (ISA).

Hydro Seafood GSP, the Norwegian-owned subsidiary of Norske Hydro, the world's largest producer of farm fish, is seeking compensation from the SO of between £10m and £20m for losses caused by ISA. It seems to have an irresistible case — particularly given the billions paid out in the BSE crisis. Which is a bit ironic given some of the facts.

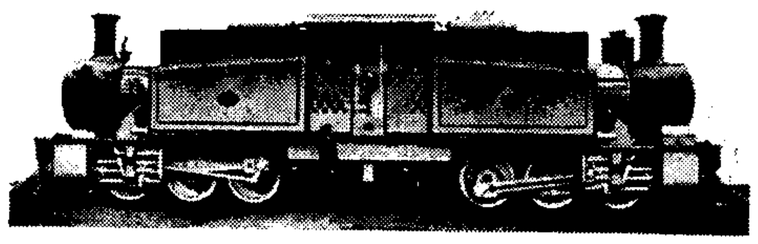
Roughly nine months after ISA was first identified in Scotland, dithering SO officials still insist they have no idea how it happened or where it came from. They are alone in their ignorance, as Hydro Seafood GSP itself well knows.

The disease was found last May in Hydro Seafood GSP cages in Loch Nevis to the north of Fort William. The freshwater hatchery which supplied diseased smolts to the site is located at Eskadale, to the north of Inverness, and is owned by... Hydro Seafood GSP. The brood stock in that hatchery was of Norwegian ancestry. ISA first appeared in Norwegian fish farms in the early 1980s. Smolts sold by Hydro Seafood GSP to other fish farmers have also developed ISA.

The disease has not yet been found in wild salmon, anywhere in the world. But as SO officials dither, an estimated 20,000 salmon from a farm where ISA is officially suspected to be present have escaped into the wild posing a potent threat to indigenous Scottish salmon and sea trout, already at their lowest levels since accurate recording began in 1952. And whose farm did these fish escape from? That's right: Hydro Seafood GSP.

Has the SO done anything to discipline the company or preserve wild fish stocks? No it hasn't. But it has, under EU regulations, ordered the slaughter of more than 4m farm fish and demanded that hundreds of cages be left fallow (empty) until the disease is eradicated. The beleaguered industry doesn't know where to find new sites for rearing this year's smolt class of immature salmon. The best the SO has promised is to "prioritise" applications from farmers who want to increase production at sites which are not infected.

Lord Sewel, SO environment minister, has offered a £9m *aid* package, but with strings: the cash must be used for reinvestment, *not* compensation; it must be matched, pound for pound, by a similar amount from the industry; and the whole deal has to be approved by the EU. Not good enough, says the industry, which wants full compensation now for losses already sustained, not promises of jam tomorrow.



SIGNAL FAILURES

Focus on Richard Branson

RICHARD BRANSON, who always assumed his Virgin Group could run trains much better than British Rail, has come down from cloud-cuckoo-land with a bump. Hot air balloons are fine for gentlemen of means but dabbling in trains is not so easy.

Virgin still talks of its "rail revolution" (telling us "It's getting better all the time"), but behind the scenes a key figure from the tsarist old guard has been called back from Siberia to sort out the mess created by Branson's dilettantes over the past couple of years. Chris Green, the man who built up Network SouthEast and ScotRail, has been appointed Virgin Rail chief executive to replace Brian Barrett.

Branson once met Green at a pre-privatisation meeting between Virgin and BR when Branson wanted to cherry-pick BR's most profitable services. Branson smugly discloses in his autobiography that he overheard BR chief executive John Welsby remark afterwards: "I'll be in my grave before that fucker gets his logo on my trains." Branson didn't realise that putting the remark in his book would elevate Welsby in people's estimation, as it demonstrates how Welsby foresaw railways under Virgin control being "fucked up" (to use Branson's own explanation after Virgin delayed delegates en route to the Labour conference).

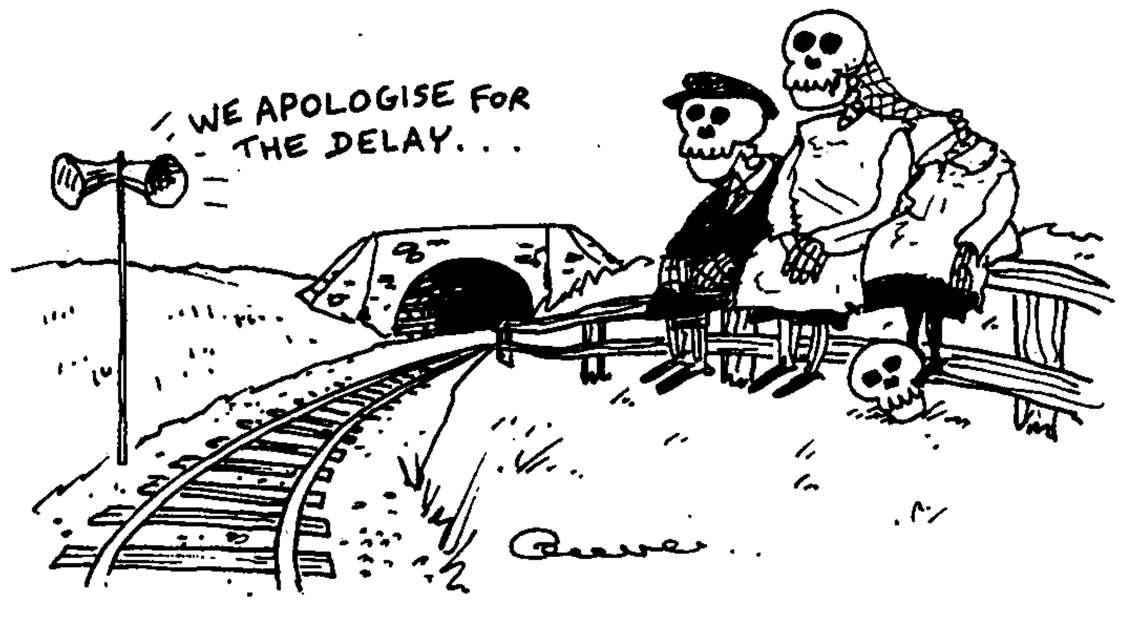
Branson recently brushed aside his company's consistent failure to meet minimum punctuality targets as "some teething problems". He said: "We face the challenge of introducing today the concepts and products designed for tomorrow, using the trains of yesterday." His repeated attempts to blame BR for Virgin's pisspoor service on the West Coast line (*Eyes passim ad nauseam*) lend irony to his appointing Green who, as managing director of BR's InterCity sector, ran the very same route before BR was broken up in 1994. Perhaps Branson has finally taken to believing the facts, rather than his own propaganda, and realised the West Coast line in 1993-94 was more punctual than it has ever been under Virgin.

With Virgin Trains in such disarray and almost universally unpopular, Green must be wondering where to start. Perhaps he will reemploy experienced staff who were dumped by Virgin (see *Eye* 944) with disastrous results for day-to-day performance. He might curb Virgin's appetite for pushing fares up relentlessly at a time when customers are thoroughly cheesed off with its service (figures released last month show both Virgin franchises generate more complaints per 100,000 passenger journeys than any other). Hopefully Green will also disabuse Virgin of the notion it must run its trains like an airline, penalising travellers who do not finalise their entire journey plans far in advance.

PS: Virgin has also "fucked up" on-train catering. One *Eye* reader who recently joined a Virgin train at Sheffield found the buffet out of sandwiches by Birmingham, nearly *four* hours before it was due at its destination. Crisps and flapjacks were all that was left "because of all the people on the train", the reader was told. She says: "This seems rather strange: I thought the buffet was there precisely for all the passengers."

Virgin CrossCountry now offers "free" tea and coffee to first class passengers — who must pay for it if they drink it or not. Virgin told booking clerks: "Full fares will rise 14 percent as travel is in the blue zone and hence passengers receive complimentary tea and coffee." Likewise "free snacks" for West Midlands passengers are covered by a trifling fare rise of, er, £17.

'Dr B. Ching'



The Railtrack Children

Pseuds Corner

"Feasible multivariate non-parametric regression estimation using weak separability."

Seminar given by JORIS PINKSE to Bristol University Economics Department

TURNING INSIDE OUT — THE ART OF IRRITABLE BOWEL SYNDROME

Are you one of the estimated 35 million Americans that is [sic] affected by IBS? Although millions are affected, few are able to put their experiences into words. The International Foundation for Functional Gastrointestinal Disorders (IFFGD) and Novartis Pharma AG are compiling a collection of painting, drawing, ceramic, sculpture, metal, fiber mixed media, surface design and photography as a unique expression of the symptom experience. The work will be exhibited at a major medical meeting. You are invited to participate in this singular initiative and donate your work to IFFGD in support of education and research.

Internet Art deadlines/competitions listing

Each alone [the cast of *Red Dwarf*] is a single element. As an ensemble they form a complete personality — and like aspects of the human mind, both complement and collide. They are reminiscent of Freud's Id, Ego and Superego, where instinct pulls against morality. They also parallel Eric Berne's model of how the childlike, parental and adult elements of a person can in different contexts come to the fore. It may seem fanciful, but *Red Dwarf* could just be a multidimensional model of the mind's different subpersonalities.

SUSAN QUILLIAM
Express Saturday Magazine

When a grape bounced off Nicky Haslam, he exclaimed: "Stop it. Some people are wearing couture."

TATLER report of Kate Reardon's 30th birthday party

"I would *love* a *pot* of tea" he says. "But your weakest, weakest. Earl Grey if you have it. Do you? Oh, you do, bliss. And if you could take the bag out almost immediately. Or is it leaf? It's a bag. Well, if you could *whip* it out almost as soon as the water has gone in, leaving just the slightest trace. Paul..." — this to the *Dover Beach*-loving waiter, "...you're a *dear*."

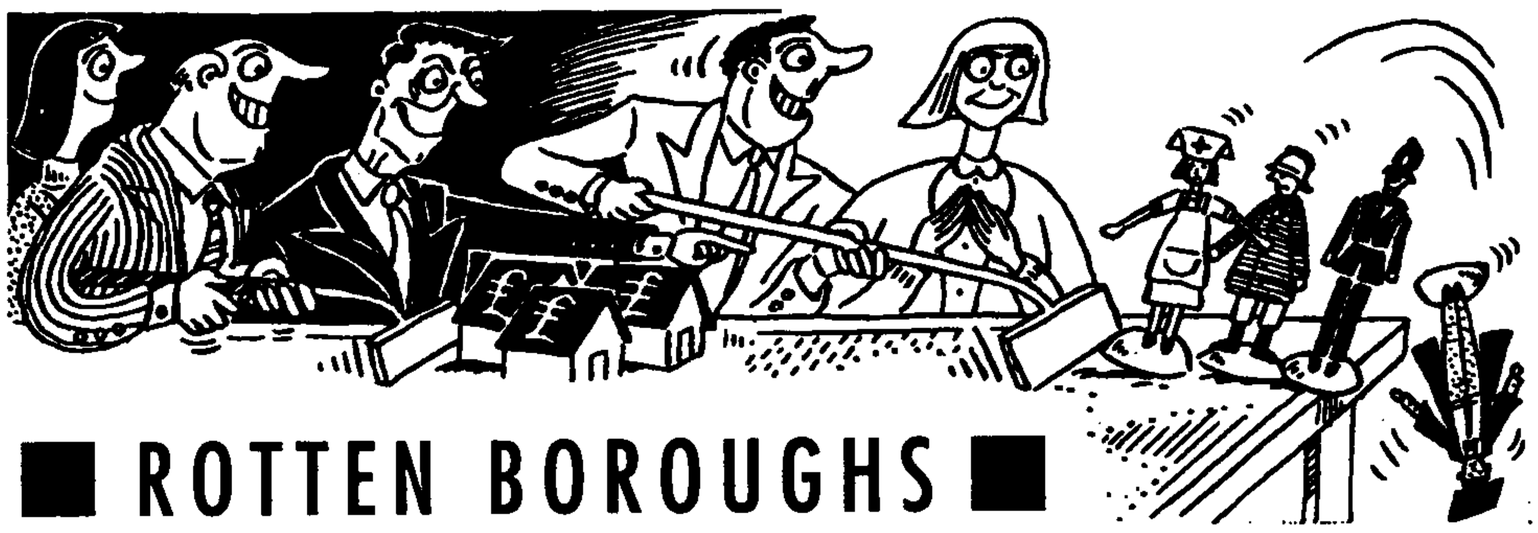
Interview with SIMON CALLOW
Guardian

Gartree High School is actively engaged in its development "road" building, and it is this metaphor that we have used to inform our thinking and work on our strategic planning. Strictly speaking, we are building several roads, as can be seen above in our strategic aims. These aims, or roads, however, will converge at certain times in our journey to the future. Our destination is always in sight, namely the fulfilment of our mission statement, or its closest approximation... These achievements should be, to name only some, an even more highly skilled, intellectually rigorous and proactive work force, this having been achieved through meaningful staff development and appraisal. We should have a well-informed, capable and empowered 10 to 14 year old student body who will take more responsibility for their own learning... Our ethos will be seen to be one that is embedded in the belief that all learning has the potential for being irresistible, as well as one that reaches out to and invites the immediate and world community.

Information about Gartree High School sent to job applicants

CONTRIBUTORS: Paul Metcalfe, 'T.J.', David McQueen, Nigel Pearson, Helen Roach, John Mullarkey.

£10 paid for entries



■ ROTTEN BOROUGHS ■

HOT STUFF

THE *Eye* is sad to hear of the impending retirement of Murkeyside's flamboyant chief fire officer Andrew Best, whose antics have entertained readers for nearly a decade now.

Who can forget the time he entertained senior colleagues at a party by donning a basque and suspenders and dancing with district officer Strange (*Eye* 790)? And who can doubt his determination to get the very best equipment for his brigade?

In 1995 for example he persuaded Merseyside fire authority (MFA) to buy a £32,000 BMW 52i, the better to chauffeur him between local hot spots. Its vital fire-fighting gear includes air conditioning, headlight washers, £700 CD player and seat warmers. So attached is Best to the vehicle he has offered the MFA £8,500 for it — which will save the authority the bother of selling it at auction where it would not fetch more than £13,000.

The chief is looking forward to cutting a dash in the car in Key West, Florida, where he plans to spend his retirement — and his £250,000 golden handshake. But his reign has not always been a happy one. He has had to take tough decisions over manpower cuts and in 1995 called in the army to break that year's firemen's strike.

His leaving do with "the lads" is expected to be a cheap and cheerful beer-and-sandwiches affair — all the cheaper since many of the lads are expected to find themselves otherwise engaged on the night. A more jovial time is expected at Best's leaving dinner with authority members — on which the same Murkeyside councillors who sit on the MFA have generously voted to spend £1,000.

● **BENT council in north-west London has pulled a fast one by sending dozens of the 422 Kosovan asylum-seekers who have turned up in the borough to towns a long way from London.**

Forty have been sent to Leeds and 30 to Hastings. Bent councillors have angered their counterparts in Leeds by placing the Kosovans in a privately-run hostel in the city's rundown Chapeltown district without any special social services or other back-up.

Nor may the Chapeltown hostel be the most sensitive location for people fleeing Serbian aggression. One of its near neighbours is the local Serbian drinking club.

FRENCH LEAVE

ANGLESEY'S standards committee has heard further evidence of the mysterious job-creating powers of international rugby matches.

In *Eye* 970 we reported how it found former council leader Gareth Winston Roberts guilty of misconduct over a "research" trip which involved taking two chums to a Wales-Ireland match in Cardiff at a total cost to the council of £2,500. Now the committee has heard how Cllr Roberts found it imperative to attend a France-Wales match in Paris in 1997 with two senior council officers as guests of French company Ecovert, the authority's rubbish collectors.

He said he had hoped to persuade the firm to move its UK office to Anglesey, so creating local jobs. This strategy was brilliantly successful: soon after the jaunt Ecovert indeed moved its office — to Bridgend in south Wales, nearly 200 miles away.

The committee recommended a further three-month suspension for Roberts on top of one already imposed over the Cardiff episode.

● **RESIDENTS of Blyth, near Newcastle, were not over-impressed when David Crawford, chief executive of Blyth Valley council, was allowed to take early retirement with a handsome payoff shortly after being convicted of drink-driving last October.**

Bedlington magistrates banned him for two years and ordered him to do 150 hours community service after police found him three times over the limit having crashed into a lamp-post.

But now locals are even less impressed. The Labour-controlled council has conferred the freedom of the borough on Crawford, despite his criminal record, while Blyth is still grieving over the deaths a year ago of three cyclists, all members of the same family, killed by a drunk driver who was three times over the limit.

ALL MOD CONS?

JOHN LOMBARI, Tory mayor of Royston, Herts, and a wealthy estate agent, was mightily offended when reporter Paul Kenyon tried to interview him for the BBC2 programme *Raising The Roof*, broadcast in January.

It was investigating allegations that Lombari had failed to pass on the best offers to vendors on his books — and had profited by buying properties himself at prices below what could have been obtained at market rates.

Lombari threatened to call the local police to deal with the impertinent hack. But last week Knacker arrived under his own steam and Lombari is now helping the fraud squad with inquiries.

OFF THEIR TROLLEYS

COUNCILLORS in Carnarfon are trying to decide what to do about an incident of "trolley rage" involving two of their members in the local Safeway's.

Cllr Mair Ellis gave deputy mayor Richard Morris Jones a loud tongue-lashing when she encountered him among the cornflakes. Startled shoppers heard Ellis allege that Cllr Jones blocked her every move in council and was guilty of accepting "freebies" during Carnarfon's annual twinning celebrations with a town in Brittany. All good knockabout stuff — except that Cllr Jones was recovering from a recent heart attack.

Explaining her actions to the council, Ellis said her voice could appear "strident" even in normal conversation, due to a hearing disability. Cllr Ellis has something of a reputation as a louder-than-life character. On one occasion in 1985, when she was mayor of the town, she became so tired and emotional she left her chain of office in a pub lavatory.

JOB SWOP OF THE WEEK

TONY CONNELL, the chief executive of SNP-controlled Moray council who was sacked for expenses fiddling, has found another little earner.

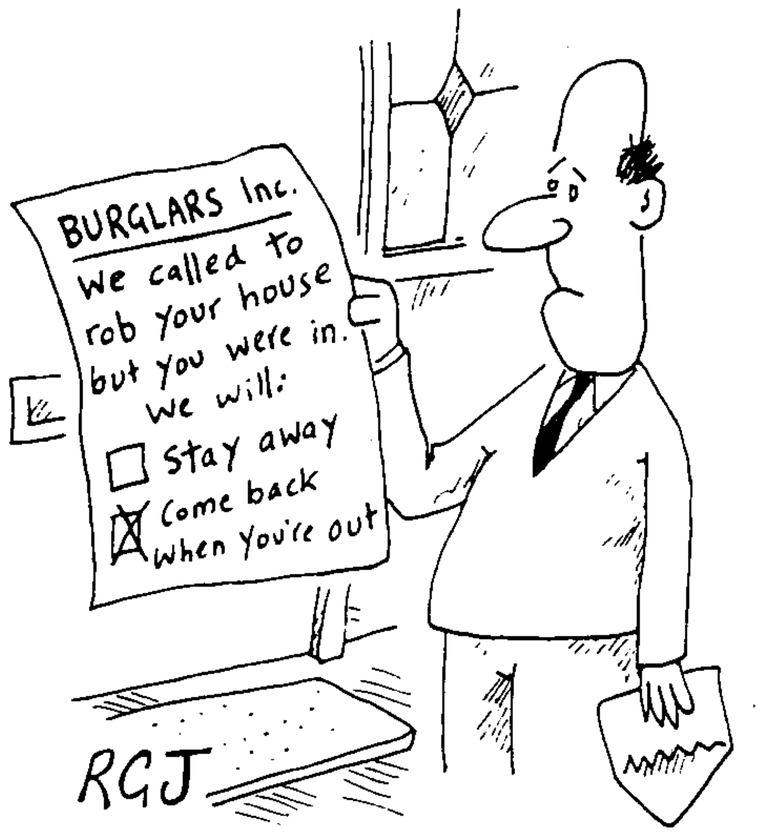
Suspended for six months on full pay before leaving with a £20,000 payoff, he had claimed travel exes while tending his garden. He will now lecture Aberdeen University law students on... local government.

Mr Sam Yeboah

In the High Court on February 19th *Private Eye* apologised to Mr Sam Yeboah, former Assistant Chief Executive of the London Borough of Hackney.

The Court heard that between 1994 and 1998 *Private Eye* had published 13 articles attacking Mr Yeboah's personal and professional integrity.

Private Eye now fully accepts that what it wrote was incorrect. Its lawyer told the Court that *Private Eye* agrees that there was no basis for its attacks on Mr Yeboah. It has paid Mr Yeboah substantial damages, and all his legal costs.



UNION NEWS

HOW confusing it must be for hacks in the Regional Independent Media (RIM) empire to work out how to report impartially on political issues concerning shadow home secretary Norman Fowler, the RIM chairman.

The problem was highlighted when Fowler clashed with home secretary Jack Straw over the latter's shortlived injunction against the *Sunday Telegraph* in the Stephen Lawrence affair.

The *Yorkshire Post*, the RIM flagship, gave fulsome front page coverage to Fowler's attack, even reporting Straw's retort that his adversary was speaking more as a newspaper proprietor than as an MP. Sadly the *Post* did not find space to tell puzzled readers which newspaper group Fowler chairs.

Not content with singing from the "press freedom" hymn sheet as an owner, Fowler even boasted in the Commons of his 35-year membership of the National Union of Journalists. Needless to say, he did not find time to add that his newspaper group would not recognise the right of its humble hacks to be represented by the same union.

MUSIC & MUSICIANS

STILL no word from the Royal Opera as to who will be its new artistic director, but with the interview room resembling the old Crush Bar on a busy night rumours are flying.

Francesca Zambello, the "robust" American director, was hot tip for a while but her prospects came to a grisly end after her interview. It seems she and Vivien "Keep-Out-The-Riff-Raff" Duffield didn't see eye to eye. Perhaps the Opera House's most generous patron took exception to Ms Zambello's style: she does boast the e-mail address *Sugar221*. Moments after the interview sweet Francesa was putting it about that she didn't like the shape of things in Floral Street and had turned the job down.

One name that has turned up unexpectedly is that of Pierre Audi, currently in charge at Netherlands Opera and formerly guardian of the Almeida Theatre in Islington. Of wealthy Lebanese extraction (his father *is* the Audi Bank), money should not be a consideration in luring Audi to London.

After eight months in Amsterdam he was accosted by the company accounts manager who asked him when he was going to start drawing his salary. Audi pouted and replied that he just kept sticking his cash card in ATMs and money kept coming out, so he was in no hurry...

His spirits may need a lift as his talent for annoying singers caught up with him recently. The distinguished Dutch baritone Lieuwe Visser was being bullied so much by Audi in a rehearsal that he screamed at Audi to "Fuck off!" To his credit he did and scuttled out of the theatre ashen with fear. Whereupon the Dutchman picked up his costume hat, which had been at the centre of the row, and took it around the orchestra asking for a few guilders for a singer whose career was now over.

Letters

Private Eye

Pellette knife

Sir,

Your flaunting of cancelled subscriptions in the last issue of the Eye horrified me.

Did Eye 969 really only manage to offend five subscribers? Your grip on your organ is obviously slipping. Don't despair though: here's a tenner to buy up the remainder of Frank De Pellette's cancelled subscription.

Yours,
G. VAHRAMIAN,
Sale.

Parsons knows

Sir,

I feel betrayed by the Eye!

Many years of reading your coverage of the antics of "La Burchill" left me woefully unprepared for the horrors revealed during the foul BBC2 programme Close Up (23 Feb).

You have failed miserably to convey just what a ludicrous brat she is. Appalling.

Please cancel my subscription forthwith.

Yours,
LOZ FARMER,
London SW12.

Lemon and McCartney

Sir,

I write regarding a letter sent in by Frank De Pellette in issue 970, in which he mentions that he did not find your pisstake of the death of Princess Linda McCartney (Eye 969) very funny. So much so, that he cancelled his subscription. I on the other hand thought it was excellent and pitched at just the right level of respect to reflect the contribution that she, in her privileged position, made to society during her life. I am also a great admirer of your unswerving servitude to that other recently deceased great public servant, whose name shall not be spoken in vain. Therefore, I have no option but to enclose my subscription.

Keep up the good work,
ANTHONY COOK,
Manchester.

Twice were warriors

Sir,

*Your letter last week saying the Zulu tactics seminar cartoon was wrong was wrong, as any viewer of the film Zulu over the last 35 years will tell you. Their formation was modelled on the fighting bull buffalo, but it is the head, **horns** and loins that a lot of people know except the pedantic Tony Dave Jones.*

Yours pulling the puller,
ANDREW ROBERT BEARE,
Norfolk.

Makepeace not war

Sir,

The bloke who writes your "Literary Review" section found his level (Eye 970) when he dredged up a quote from "William Makepiece Thackeray" [sic]. No one ever used the "Makepiece" until Hollywood did, in 1975. "William Makepiece Thackeray's Barry Lyndon — a film by Stanley Kubrick." Hollywood, ridiculously, thought that "Makepiece" sounded classy and grand and Ye-Olde, and they found a resilient sucker at the EYE. It was a lousy quote anyway (your bloke should sack his quote-boy), and, of course, a lousy piece.

Yours etc,
MARTIN AMIS,
London NW1.

LUVVIES

"I've never been quite comfortable with the world and I need a place where I could feel at home. But it's hard to act. It requires you to give everything you can. It's like a love affair which you have to cultivate and keep alive. You can't allow it to go stale. And the things that kill it are success, doing it for money."

NICK NOLTE
Telegraph

An occasional column devoted to gems from the acting profession. £10 paid for entries.

Lookalike

Robin 'Potato Head' Page

Jeremy 'Potato Head' Clarkson

Sir,

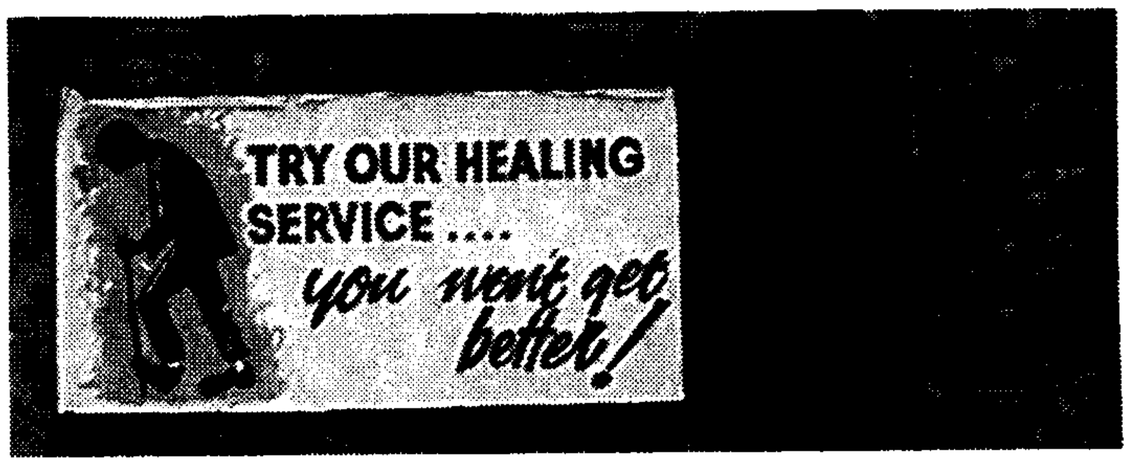
Talking about Genetically Mollified Orgasms in the local the other night, strange evidence came to light concerning sinister and covert cloning in Buckinghamshire.

I enclose two recent newspaper pictures of Mr Potato Head — Are these clones? I think we should be told.

Yours sincerely,
RICHARD HIPKISS,
High Wycombe, Bucks.

NEW OLD SAYINGS

Where there's Mick there's brass



I-SPY

Willesden, London NW10

Submitted by Jim Sullivan. £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs. No transparencies.)*

O·B·N

It is the fact that Williams, just 25 this year, appeals to young and old, gay and straight, radical and middle of the road, that now gives him such huge potential to be a star. *The Big Breakfast* and the likes of *TFI Friday* would be too small to contain his across the board appeal. If anything, he could be the British Oprah; not a mere presenter, but a cultural force.

EMMA FOREST on ROBBIE WILLIAMS
Radio Times

£10 paid for entries put forward for the Order of the Brown Nose.

Roger Roger

Sir,

At the risk of being an anorak on the subject, your "Letters to the Editor" on the late King Hussein (970) was a bit unfair to us radio amateurs (or hams if you prefer).

Amateur radio is much more tightly regulated than CB, with which you seem to be confusing us. Apart from the requisite exam(s) which have to be taken, we most certainly don't have call signs like "Burnt Toast". If you had bothered to check on your facts, you would have quickly found that the late king had the call sign "JY1" and was a very sought-after contact.

In this country our call signs are issued to us by representatives of the Radiocommunications Agency and we have very little choice as to what they will be.

Although only a hobby, we have all worked hard to gain our licence and coverage like yours does us no good at all at a time when we are actively seeking to encourage youngsters to take an interest. Next time, please do a bit of research...

Yours,
TERRY BICKELL,
Chesterton, Cambridge.

Lie of the land

Sir,

Despite your exposé of new Labour hypocrisy (EYE 970), patents on GM foods and gene sequences may not be such a bad thing. A patent is a bargain between the state and an inventor in which the inventor gets a monopoly in exchange for publishing the invention. True, the state doesn't enforce the publishing requirement strongly enough, but if no patents were granted inventors (like Monsanto) would keep their technology even more secret. GM technology is so powerful that it will happen come what may and the best defence for citizens is to have it in the open.

Let's see food labelling which not only says that it contains genetically-modified material, but what the genetic modification is for (herbicide resistance, anyone? — so much for Monsanto's lies about reducing pesticide use) and — better still — a pointer to all the relevant information, such as the patent itself, the relevant peer-reviewed literature and the results of the safety tests.

EDWARD BARROW,

Via e-mail.

In denial

Why Oh Why?

Sir,

Well done! The article of 19 February regarding the possible closure of Gaddesden Row school highlights what many "voters" in Hemel Hempstead suspect: "Something Smells in Labour-controlled Herts Education Department".

Why close a school that has such a successful record?

Why did education officials attempt to use erroneous financial accounting?

Why turn away potential pupils?

Why ignore Ofsted reports?

Why play with diction by calling the "Village" a "Hamlet"?

C. BARRON,

Via e-mail.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"The script evolved after three years of gesticulation."
BILL KENWRIGHT, Radio 2
(P. Nicholls)

"I was an ex-professional footballer once."
ALAN MULLERY, Talk Radio
(D. Scholey)

"The left foot sees it and hits it out of the air."
RON ATKINSON, ITV
(R. Stubbington)

"I can take the pressure off the clock ticking on the wall."
KEVIN KEEGAN, Radio 5 Live
(Aidan MacDermott)

Eamonn Holmes: *So, how long does London Fashion Week last?*
Fashion Presenter: *A week.*
GMTV
(Andrew McCormack)

Balled out

Sir,

I just caught up with your piece on Radio Three's Jazz Century (Music & Musicians, 969). You were quite right to draw attention to the fact that Ballin' the Jack was played at the wrong speed, but a little over-enthusiastic in your attribution of blame. This foolish error which occurred in part three (not part two as you reported) was made by me and me alone, in the final stages of mastering the programme. Presenter Russell Davies should be absolved of all blame for my ghastly solecism, which was corrected for the programme repeat.

Yours sincerely,
DAVID PERRY,

Producer, Jazz Century.

Witts' end

Sir,

If that Pseud's Corner quote (Eye 970) from the composer Pierre Boulez is exact, which I doubt, then I can assure you he was — 'ow you zey — taking the piss out of places like the South Bank Centre, which promote hopeless thematic festivals of the type he was mocking.

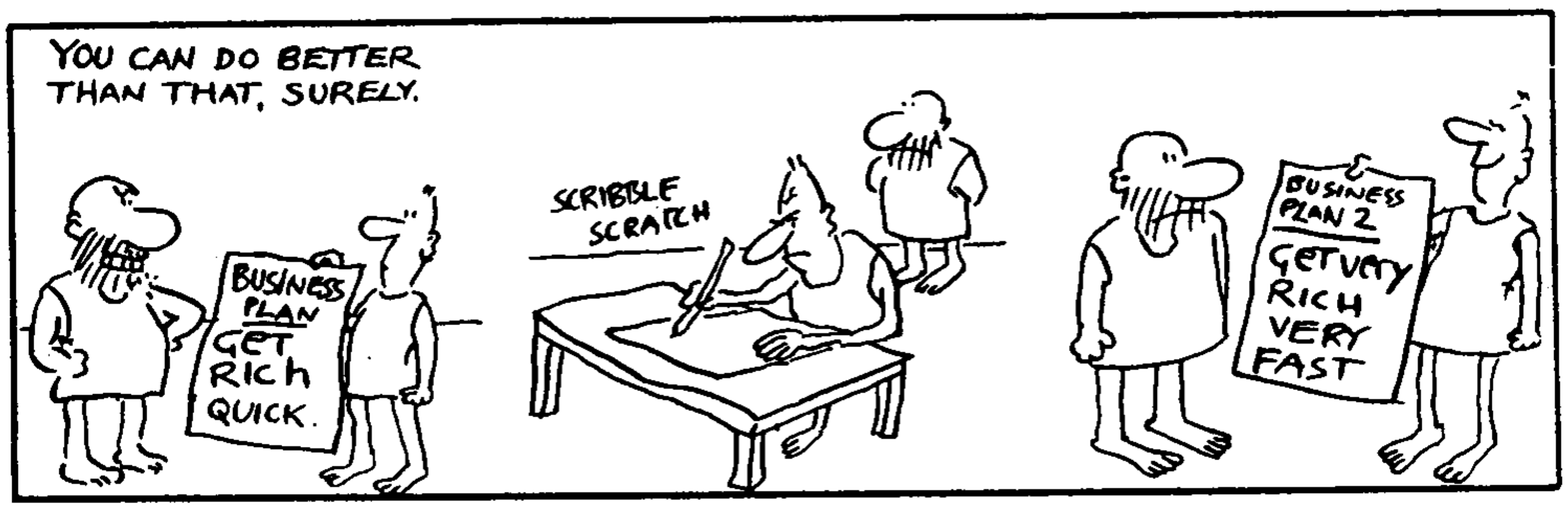
That man who sent the quote in, a rival composer called Keith Burstein: shouldn't I get his tenner for pointing this out?

RICHARD WITTS,

Brighton.

HOM SAP

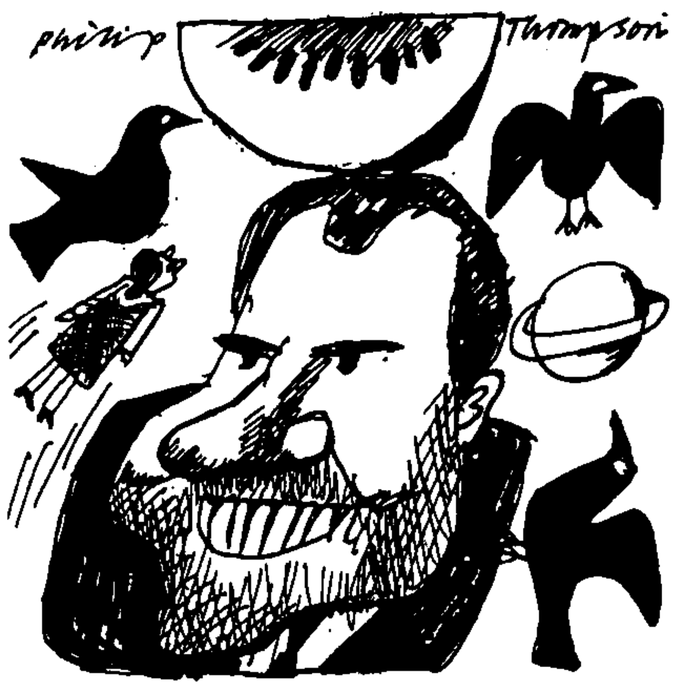
AUSTIN



FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

"My grandson loves Mississippi Mudcake," said Phyllis Bayer, as she recuperated at her home in Adelaide, "so when I saw a huge one in the bakery window, I went straight in and bought it for his birthday. It was very moreish, and I had three big slices at his party, and so did my friend Mavis. It was delicious, but the next thing I knew I was hurtling through the air, flying past the stars on a trip to the moon, with bluebirds and giant melons soaring past me as I floated upwards. I even



saw Elvis, Harpo Marx, and President Nixon. I'm telling you, I was completely out of it."

Eighty-nine-year-old grandmother Bayer was rushed to Adelaide Hospital, along with five other elderly guests, all of whom were diagnosed as suffering from acute narcotics poisoning. "It didn't take us long to trace the problem back to the bakery" said a hospital spokesman. "It seems that one employee had baked a very strong marijuana chocolate cake for a colleague as a birthday treat, but another worker didn't realise what was going on, and sold the cake to Mrs Bayer. If she'd eaten one more slice, I think she might have ingested a fatal dose."

The police decided not to prosecute the bakery, after learning that two workers had been sacked. *(The Herald-Sun, Melbourne, 23/1/99. Spotter: Peter Knight)*

"It had become difficult to support my many, many children, and I was growing tired of my frequent and painful erections," Nanda Lal Adhikari told a reporter from his hospital bed in Pashupatinagar. "I was cutting grass early on Sunday morning, I had no money, and my erection was bothering me a lot. I had a sickle in my hand, and I thought 'why not?' So I cut off my penis, threw it away, and then passed out."

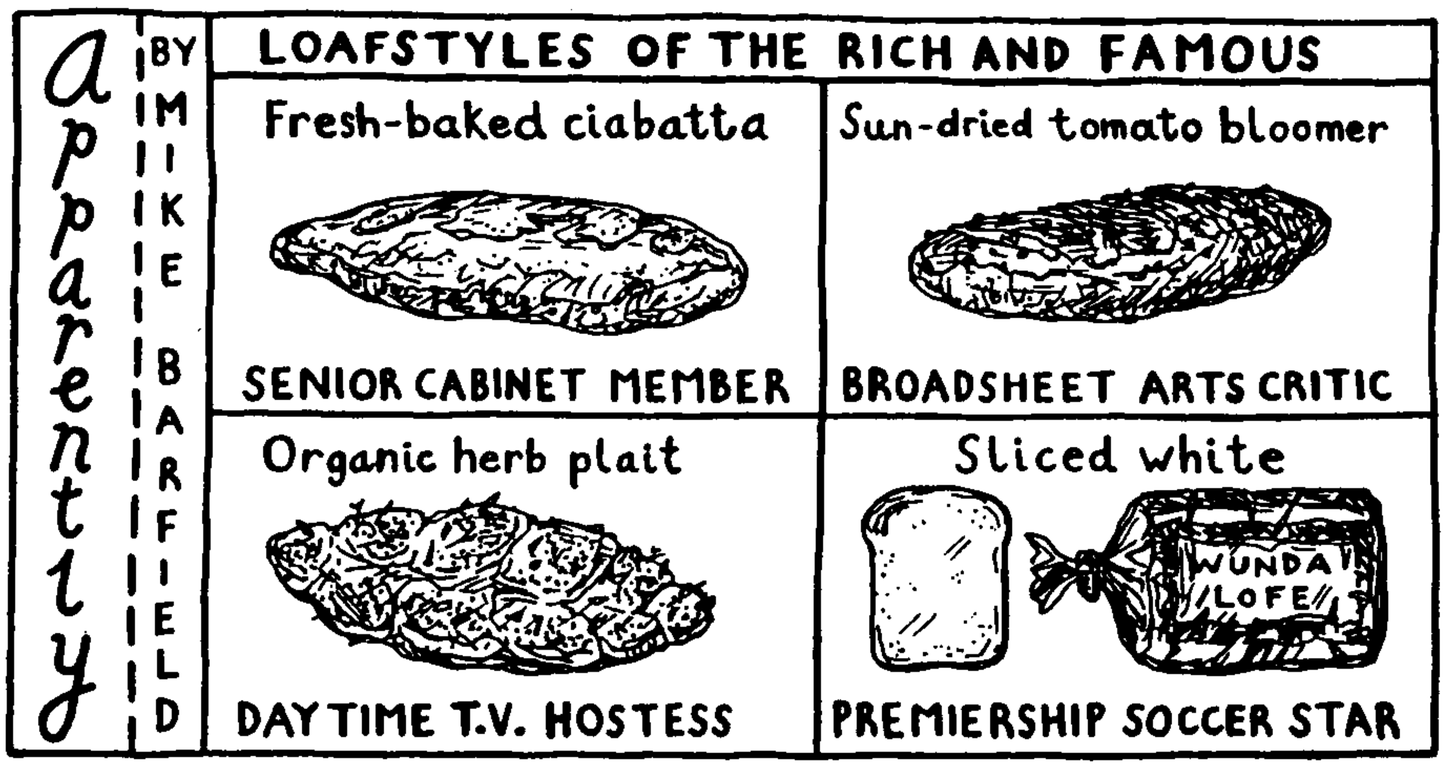
Adhikari, a forty-six-year-old illiterate peasant farmer with nine children, was recovering in Ilam Hospital, where he had been rushed unconscious. "It seems that he was aware of the various family planning programmes being run by the government, but was under the impression that such operations would make a person lose energy" said Tej Prasaud, a local pharmacist. "After a search, we thought we'd found his penis in the bushes, so we took it to the hospital in a bag of some frozen mattur panir. But it turned out not to be his penis, just a discarded chicken neck."

Dr Surya Gurung, who was attending Adhikari's case, later gave his diagnosis. "He severed his penis right at the bottom, so we have simply filled in the wound using skin from other parts of his body, leaving an opening only to discharge urine. I suspect a dog has eaten his genitals by now. That's what usually happens." *(The Kathmandu Post, 20/1/99. Spotter: Terry Hope)*

—o—

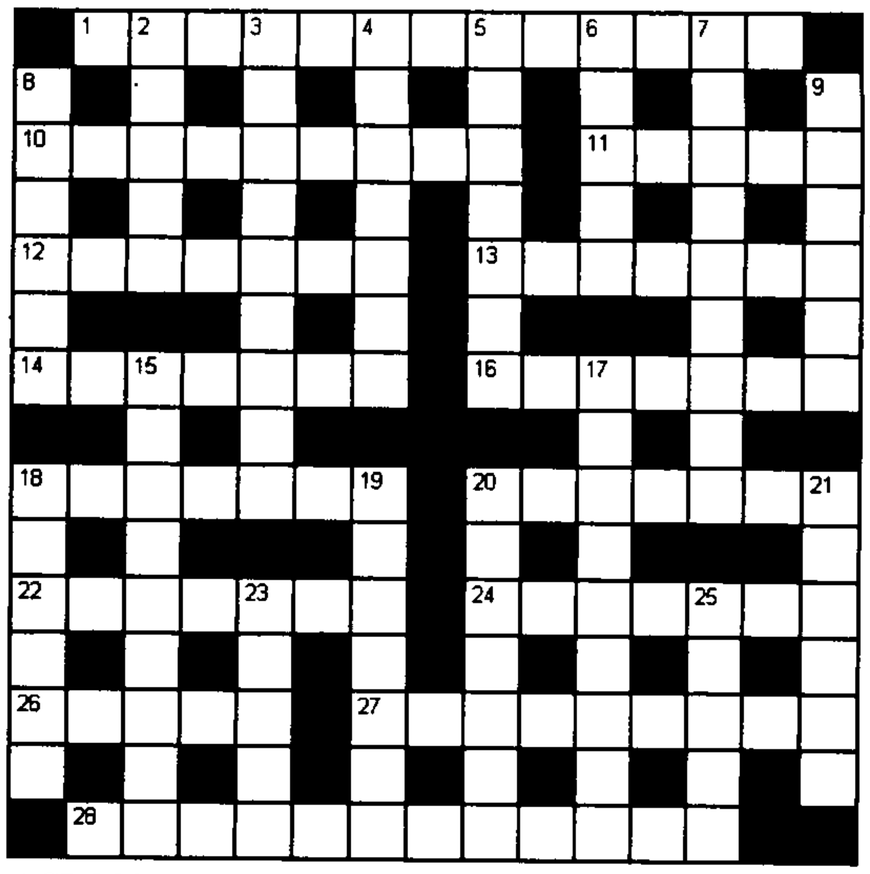
"It has to be stated bluntly that bureaucratic control over arms procurement has led to numerous purchases of equipment that would be of little or no use in an actual combat situation. Civilians often forget that the whole purpose of a weapons system is to be devastating in times of war. Unfortunately, the control of the procurement process by bureaucrats has led to the possession of stocks of weapons that are useless in modern combat.

"Why India has not taken up the option of inducting the SSN-22 rather than the SSN-25 is a mystery known only to the initiated. Most of the missile systems purchased by India are stationary types susceptible to jamming, while the Indian navy does not have a single submarine with missile capability. Furthermore, the torpedoes fitted into Indian warships are not effective against capital craft with modern electronic systems. One missile-capable kilo-class vessel has been on order from Russia for years, but has yet to arrive. As for procuring an effective answer to the AK-47, we waited ten years for the bureaucrats to address the problem, and hundreds of soldiers had to die before the babus finally cleared the file. In short, gentlemen, we must face the truth: Indian weapons are good, except in a war. When they don't work at all." (Internal Army Report, leaked to The Times of India, 15/1/99. Spotter: Kathy Benn)



EYE CROSSWORD 126

by Cyclops — *£100 prize*



ACROSS

1/28 The new image Hague wants to present: firm, masculine, fiery... with a tendency to be cautious (13,12)
10 Sting behind some clever bastard (5-4)
11 English hero's game requires guts but no energy (5)
12 Bum has no right to stagger, being no romantic (7)
13 Snout inside, stuck in pipe? (7)
14 Speaker's place to sort out booze? (7)
16 One with no faith in seat (he is Tory) (7)
18 Be one of the faithful or whips will be around! (7)
20 Saying "Ecstasy" to a copper and stuff (7)
22 Stop topless Geri making a comeback! (7)
24 Caught tosser – vulgar habit (7)
26 Stimulant has to be given to backward *Oasis* member to elicit communication! (5)
27 Romantics' conception tips (9)
28 (see 1)

DOWN

2 One to act badly with nothing on up in Nebraska (5)
3 Head bloke, drunken rich prat, holds one (9)
4 Jock about right, er, as a nutcase (7)
5 Fashionable Brenda has it off with a sloth (7)
6 Rich, important type bearing note to Geldof (5)
7 One who noises abroad the news of row surrounding Crown corruption (4,5)
8 Shark of great interest (6)
9 Euphemism for call-girl's car (6)
15 Members up against 'the old man' and party – it's torture (9)
17 Hague's top, hey! hey!, securing vote of the lower orders (3,6)
18 Parry needs Brenda for a screw (6)
19 Blair's pointless first showing (7)
20 Create trouble about Times filth (7)
21 Slough supermodel entertains The Gunners (6)
23 Monica's views about Bill's tip (5)
25 Boobs – Straw's head called for in report (5)

£100 prize to first solution opened on 12.3.99. Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1V 5RG.

Solution to Crossword No. 125

Winner: MIKE MORRIS

ACROSS: 1 Times 4 Dirty dog 10 Editorial 11 Squib 12 Jack Cunningham 14 Outings 15 Satanic 17 Exposes 20 Voluble 22 Conjugal rights 25 Angst 26 Union Jack 27 Sundries 28 Costs.

DOWN: 1 Twee 2 Main act 3 Stockings 5 (see 20 dn.) 6 Tyson 7 Dauphin 8 Gobsmacked 9 Sit-ups 13 Lower class 16 Telegenic 18 Pink gin 19 Statute 20/5 Virgin Islands 21 Betrays 23 Utter 24 Skis.

POLICE BEGIN EQUALITY TRAINING

WE WILL END DISCRIMINATION
Knacker's Shock Pledge

by Our Man At Scotland Yard **PC World**

A REPENTANT Sir Paul Knacker today called for a greater degree of understanding towards minorities.

"The public needs to show much more awareness," said Sir Paul, "of those members of our society who are disadvantaged by belonging to one particular group, ie the police."

It's An Unfair Cop

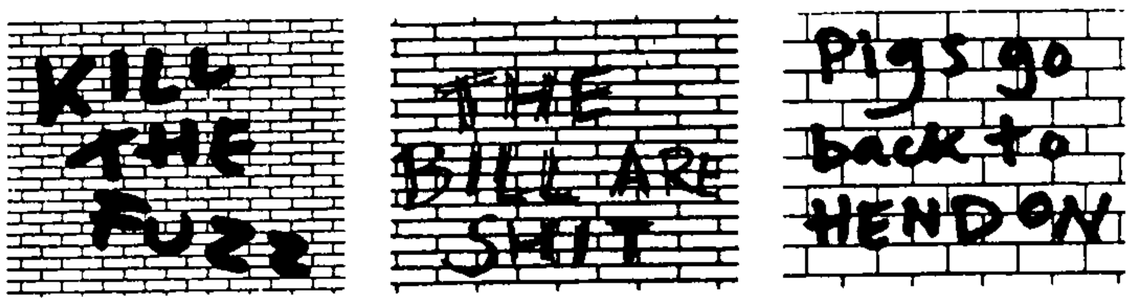
"There is a stereotyped image of the average 'blue man'," he went on, "which is distorted and unfair."

Too many people, he said, think of the ordinary constable as:

- **of low IQ**
- **prone to violence**
- **essentially dishonest**
- **connected to drug dealers**
- **likely to use weapons when confronted**
- **going round in groups, often late at night, looking for a fight**
- **driving high-performance cars recklessly through town centres.**

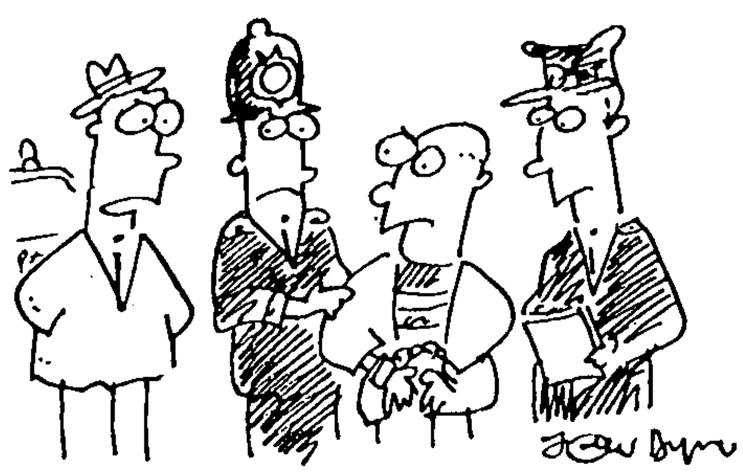
Scotland Yardie

"No wonder," Sir Paul concluded, "that the blue community increasingly feel isolated from society, and driven to assert their identity by acts of anti-social behaviour, which only serves to reinforce their sense of alienation from the law-abiding majority."



Typical examples of hate-filled graffiti which Britain's blue population is forced to confront every day

"OK, read him his rights... and the names and addresses of the witnesses"



NEASDEN WOMAN IN SHOCK CLINTON RAPE CLAIM

by What The Papers Say Investigative Reporter Of The Year **PHIL SPACE**

A 68-YEAR-OLD Neasden woman claimed yesterday that she had not been raped by President Clinton in 1969.

Mrs X (Gladys Winterspoon) alleged that she had never met the President when he was a Rhodes scholar studying at nearby Oxford University.

"He did not drive down the M4 at three in the morning, break into my bedroom and have his way with me. This never happened."

But the White House was quick to deny Mrs Winterspoon's claims.

ORAL EVIDENCE

"We get a lot of these stories from women who fantasise that they have not been raped by the President. In fact, they usually have."

Last night Mrs Winterspoon demanded a four hour interview with TV's Jon Snow for a fee of £400,000 in order to give her side of the story.

Fay Weldon is 94.

TV Highlights

BBC2

One Man And His Dog

This week Yorkshire shepherd Bill Hague comes a cropper when he fails to get all his sheep into the pen. Desperately he shouts, "Come on, Hezza! Good boy, Clarkie!"

But the old sheep ignore him and head for Farmer Blair's pen instead.

BBC1

The Dyno-Rod Men

Major new BBC docudrama follows a crack team of drain operatives in Carshalton as they go round unblocking drains. This week trouble starts when Steve and Gary fall out over a backed-up U-bend.

Plus Coming Soon

The Arsonists (ITV)
They come round and burn your home.

Chemists From Hell (BBC)
We visit the country's worst pharmacists.

Toad Rescue (C4)
The return of Britain's top toad rescuers with more pond dramas.

Lift Rage (BBC2
Trouble starts when accountant Morris Fitzgibbon presses *(That's enough terrible programmes. Ed.)*

ADVERTISEMENT

Statement From The Chairman of Gnomaphone plc

THERE have been alarmist reports this week alleging that mobile phones can cause loss of memory and disorientation... er... where was I? Oh, yes... there have been alarmist reports in the press this week linking the use of mobile phones with something or other I'm sorry it seems to have slipped my memory ah yes memory loss I would like to make it clear to all our customers that there is no danger whatsoever to the public from mobile fridges these have been thoroughly tested on rats and I would be quite happy to eat one were it to be offered to me in a restaurant and by the way doesn't it irritate you when people use mobile phones in restaurants? I think they should ban them or better still get rid of them altogether. Besides, I read in the paper that they give you memory loss.

Lord Gnome, Gnomaphone plc, Newbury, Berks.

ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

Incumbent: Rev. A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)

Hullo!

I can only have one theme this week, and that is the importance of unity, which means no one being left out and everyone being left in!

Like with our "parish changeover plan", to start taking the collection in Euros like our fellow churches on the Continent instead of old-fashioned pounds!

You know, when everybody wants to do one thing, because it is a sensible idea, then the person who thinks they want to do something else looks pretty silly!

I don't want to mention any names but I think we're all agreed that Mr William Hague from the 6th Form Debating Society has made a bit of a fool of himself recently.

As it says in the Good Book, "He who is not with me, is against me" *(Letter to the Euromans 2.16).*

If we just stand on the sidelines being negative, how can we hope to play any part in building a better world?

When I visited the local swimming pool recently I saw one little lad, shivering on the side and refusing to go in.

"Why won't you go in and join the others?" I asked him.

"Because I can't swim, Vicar," the boy replied.

"Well, if you don't take the plunge, you'll never learn," I told him, and gave him a good push to help him on his way.

With the help of the lifeguard, he was soon back on the side, with no harm done!

But the important thing was that he had learned a very useful lesson, which is that, if we ever want to achieve anything in this life, we must always be ready to join in.

"Go with the flow!" It's an expression I particularly like, and I've turned it into a chorus for us to sing on Sunday.

Go with the flow, go with the flow,
Always say 'yes' and never say 'no',
Go with the flow, go with the flow,
Look, it's the best idea you know!

© Words and Music T. Blair

Yours,

Tony

To Remember In Your Prayers

...Mr Rhodri Morgan, who was very disappointed at not being appointed conductor of our Welsh Male Voice Choir. It may be that most people in the choir wanted him to get the job, but that is hardly the point. The important thing is whoever is chosen should be someone who can work closely with the Vicar, and make sure that they can all sing from the same hymn sheet without any wrong notes. That is why the choir chose my friend Mr Michael.

So we therefore pray that Mr Morgan may be guided to remain silent on this matter, rather than going around the parish whingeing that the whole thing was rigged. T.B.

Notices From The Editor, A. Campbell

I would like to make it clear that there is nothing peculiar about the fact that, as Editor of the Parish Newsletter, I attend all meetings of the PCC. I do this on the personal invitation of the Vicar, whom I happen to know greatly values my input. However, the idea that I would presume to tell the Vicar how to run the parish is absurd. I merely make suggestions, which he then acts upon, much as Mr Mandelson used to do before he had to go on his sabbatical.

I hope this will put an end to the tittle-tattle in the Cool Britannia Arms. A.C.

Special Service For Racial Harmony In The Parish

The Vicar writes:

The last thing any of us want to do is jump on the bandwagon surrounding the tragic story of poor Stephen Lawrence, which is why I am holding a special service next Sunday to express our solidarity with our local black community. So, if anyone knows any black people, please ask them along!

Parish Postbag

Dear Vicar,

Contrary to some predictions (ie, yours!), there was a really big turn-out in the Church Hall, when I asked people to support my campaign to play the part of Lord Mayor of London in the St Albion's pantomime. Can you imagine that amount of people turning out to hear you giving one of your ser

Yours sincerely,
K. Livingstone,
Newts R Us (The Aquatic Pet Centre), The High St.

(The Editor reserves the right to cut any letter from Mr Livingstone for reasons of space. A.C.)

Looking Ahead...

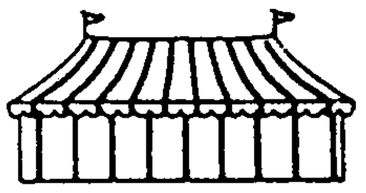
It may seem a long time ahead to next summer's Flower Festival, but I know that some of you are already making preparations for the vegetable section. Our good friend Mr Sainsbury tells me that he is quietly confident of winning all the categories. He tells me, "My tomatoes are already the size of a football, my marrow weighs three tons and my carrots are unbelievable. They've got birds' wings, fish heads and they're bright blue!"

We won't ask David what is his secret, because that's very much his business! But we're all really looking forward to seeing them! T.B.

TEXT OF THE WEEK

Chosen by parishioner Andrew Wilson
"Breathe on me, breath of Tony"
(Book of Halitosis, 7.17)
Not sure about this one! T.B.

Millennium Tent Update



from Mr Falconer ("Charlie")

It has not been easy stepping into Mr Mandelson's shoes at this late stage, but I think I've come up with a pretty exciting list of suggestions for how we can make the Tent a great success. These include:

- special Millennium Tent pencils with the words "St Albion's 2000"
- special car stickers reading "We've seen the Tent. Have you?"
- special tea towels printed with a full colour black-and-white photo of the Vicar, with caption "St Albion's Man of the Millennium!"

We hope that most of these items will be "on line" in time for the ceremonial opening of the Tent in July 2001. *(Is this right? A.C.)*

VOICE OF The Mirror

Never Again

TODAY we start our campaign to end Racism in Britain.

The seriousness with which we undertake this task shows that this country still leads the world in facing up to its responsibilities, unlike some of our partners in Europe. The Frogs I mean, honestly – and what about the Krauts?

You don't see the garlic-eaters and the squareheads tackling racism do you? No, we say "Achtung, Fritz!" and "Ooh-La-La Garçon!" to you!

It's time to follow the Mirror's lead and stamp out the menace of bigotry for ever!

© *Piers Moron*

Thousands of Foreigners Dead in Avalanche Horror

by Our Showbiz Staff John and Peter Snow

"DAHLING, we're all having a marvellous time!"

So spoke plucky English actress Patsy Pancake, who, along with 47 other British celebrities, has been stranded for the past 24 hours in the tiny, fashionable Austrian ski-resort of Unterschnee.

Talking last night on her mobile, Patsy described how she and her party had coped with the worst ever avalanches to have hit the Alps for over a million years.

"We're playing board games, lighting candles and drinking tinned soup. It's all tremendous fun, just like it must have been in the war."

No Business Like Snow Business

Among those sharing the white hell that is Unterschnee with Patsy are actor Simon Suave, socialite Tara Boomdeay and Fergie's merchant banker friend Henry Brocklebank-Brocklehurst, 22.

- **Your Avalanches Tonight 7**
- **Dempster's Avalanche Diary 9**
- **Avalanche Horror – Blair's Message of Sympathy To Stranded Brits 11**

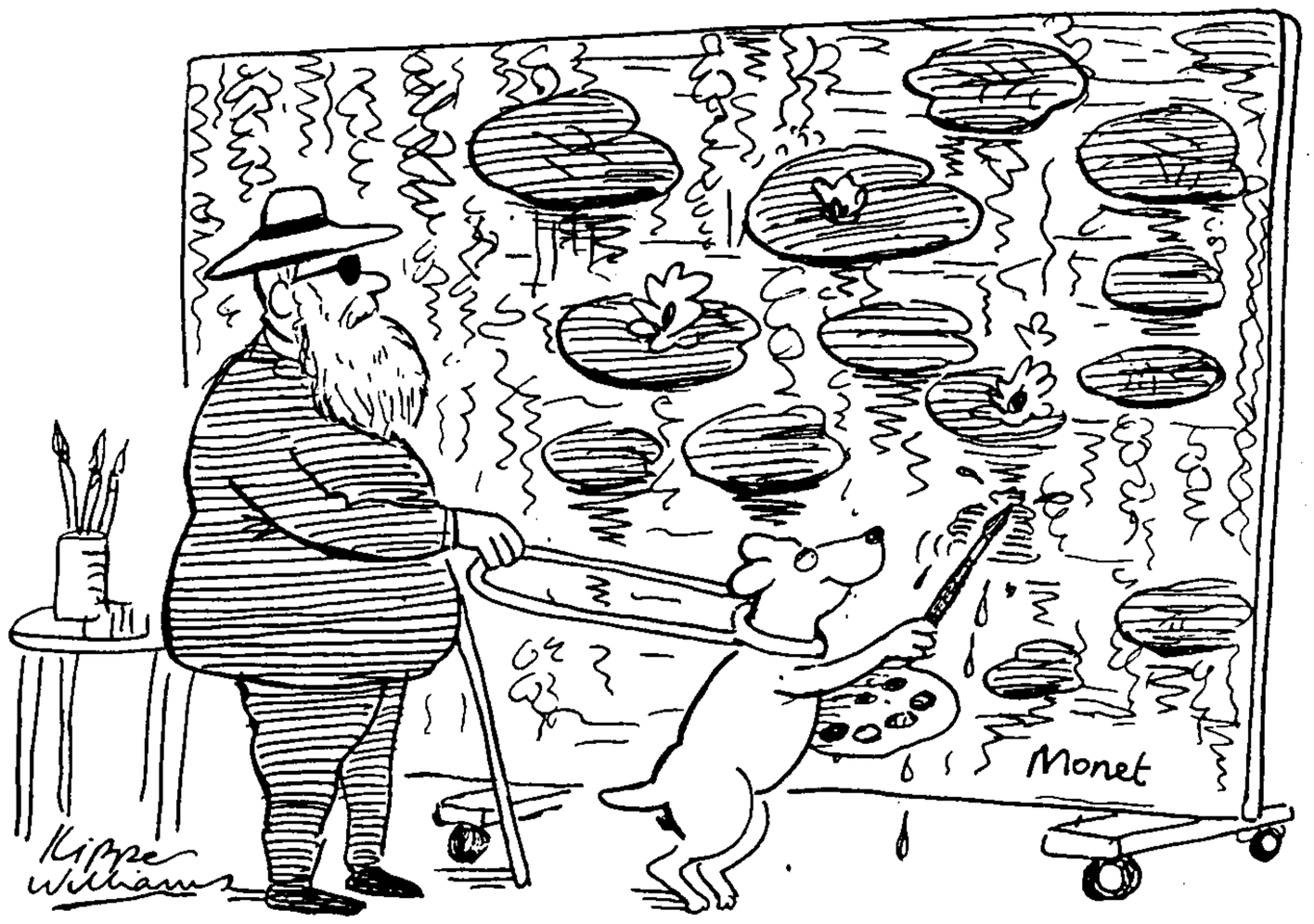
The Sunday Telegraph

Is Straw The New Hitler?

THE ATTEMPT by the Home Secretary to gag the Sunday Telegraph marks the lowest point in the history of free speech since Hitler burned the books outside the Reichstag.

By a brilliant feat of investigation, this newspaper managed to receive through the post a copy of a top secret government report marked "Embargoed until Wednesday". After a top level editorial discussion, we courageously decided that, since we had nothing else to put in the paper, it was our bounded duty to... sacred freedoms... inalienable rights... arrogance of office... Jackboot Straw... straw dogs... clutching at straws... Dominic on holiday... Will this do?

© *Matthew D'Arshola*



THE Sun

Friday, March 5, 1999

SUN POLL

100% VOTE AGAINST €URO

BY SUN EDITOR DAVID YELLOW

IN AN astonishing new phone poll 100% – yes, folks, 100% – of all the people whom we rang up said that they thought that joining the euro would be a terrible mistake.

In an exhaustive survey the Sun rang a total of one person, carefully selecting him on the grounds of age, sex and ownership of News International Plc. His message was clear "Put this on the front page you shit-faced little alien or you're fired – understand?"

Poll In Full

	Yes	No
● Would you wipe your bum with a euro?	0%	100%
● Isn't the pound bloody wonderful?	0%	100%
● Do you want a Sky dish installed?	100%	0%

(You're fired. R.M.)

ON OTHER PAGES

■ How sterling can perk up your love life **2** ■ Is the euro causing killer avalanches? **3** ■ Why Tony Blair is great in all respects apart from this one particular issue **7**

OUTRAGE OVER SHOCK CHANNEL 4 PROGRAMME

by Our Media Staff **Gay Search**

THERE was fury last night after Channel 4 transmitted a two-hour programme containing no scenes of full frontal nudity, under-age homosexual sex or explicit bad language.

But last night controller Michael Jacksoff was unrepentant, and defended his decision to broadcast *Racing from Wincanton*. "This station is committed to radical television and we feel that this strand of programming has a vital place in the schedules. You and I may not find the sight of horses running around in circles very appealing, but a sizeable minority of viewers want to see this sort of thing."

HORSE PLAY

He continued, "We cannot have an entire channel devoted to homo-erotic pornography and titillating investigations into the British sex industry. That is just safe, boring and predictable. Every channel does that. Channel 4 must keep pushing back the boundaries of taste – and if that means *Racing From Wincanton* then that's fine with me!"

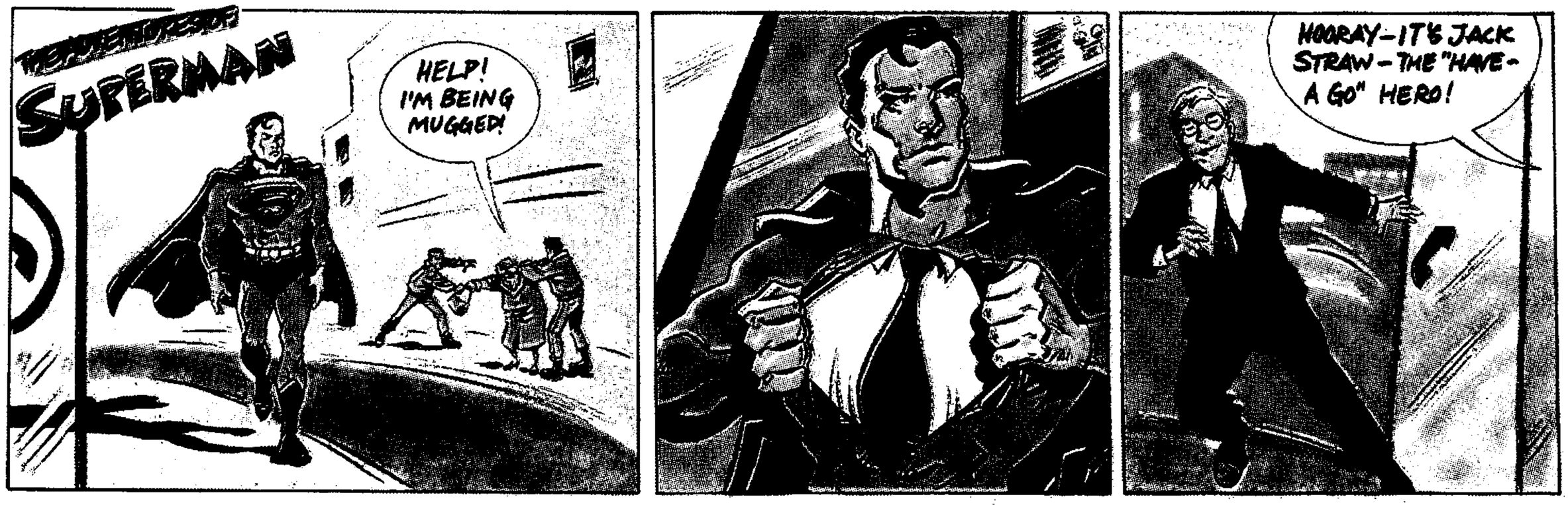
Channel 5 is even worse.

The Vagina Monologues
See Reviews, page 38.
King's Head, Islington Upper Street, N1 (0171-226 1916)
⊖ Angel/Highbury & Islington. Tue-Sat 8pm, mats Sat & Sun 3.30pm, ends 6 Mar. £12-£13.

You'll Have Had Your Hole
Irvine Welsh's revenge tragedy.
LA2 Charing Cross Road, WC2

Independent

☐ **Outlook:** tomorrow very cold and frosty in England and Wales. Milk in W Scotland and N Ireland. Thursday very cold everywhere. *Times*



Roy of the Fuggers
NEW CHAIRMAN OF FUGHAM F.C., MOHAMED AL-FAYED HAS GREAT NEWS.
I'VE DISCOVERED A NEW WONDER TURF FOR THE PITCH, ROY.
WHAT'S IT MADE OF BOSS ?
MILLIONS OF UNSOLD COPIES OF THE HUMOROUS MAGAZINE PUNCH -TURNED INTO MULCH !
BUT IS IT ALL-WEATHER BOSS ?
OF COURSE- NO ONE BUYS PUNCH IN THE SUMMER OR WINTER !
COME ON YOU FUGGERS !
J COOPER

THE POLLY FILLER INTERVIEW

Joseph Fiennes, the star of "Shakespeare In Love"

THE alarm went off at 7.00am — just as I finally managed to get to sleep.

This was entirely due to my being kept awake all night by two insensitive males. The first was my toddler Charlie who got into my bed at 3.00am saying he was having a bad dream. He was probably dreaming that he had children who woke him up in the middle of the night.

The second was my partner Simon who crawled in an hour later stinking of toothpaste (no doubt covering up the beer he'd been drinking all night with the lads whilst watching Mexican Baseball on the widescreen TV at the pub).

I don't know which of them I find more irritating. In the end I had to wake up the au pair and tell her to sort it all out while I slept in her room. (Very comfortable, by the way. Too comfortable, in fact.)

Anyway, things got worse at breakfast when I reminded everyone that today was the day I was interviewing Joseph Fiennes at ten o'clock at Soho House — and it might be quite nice for me to have some peace and quiet over a cup of coffee to think about what I was going to wear.

They all trouped grumpily out of the kitchen and left me to it. Men! (And au pairs.)

An hour later the minicab still hadn't arrived and I was screaming blue murder at the absent bloody au pair – why did she need the car to drive Charlie the six miles to his playgroup? Don't these girls have legs?

It's always the same with minicabs – do you wait another five minutes and hope it'll turn up? Or do you cut your losses and take the tube?

I took the tube which, according to Simon, would get me into Tottenham Court Road in plenty of time to meet the star of "Shakespeare In Love".

Simon was wrong again, as some man (of course) had unhelpfully thrown himself under a train at Hammersmith.

"Why did he have to do it, today of all days, when I've got a date with the hunky sibling of the even hunkier Ralph Fiennes to interview?" I shouted at the RMT guard who ignored me as he rudely helped a woman with a pushchair up the escalator.

Eventually, at 11.15 I arrived at the door of Soho House. I rang the buzzer and announced, "It's Polly Filler here. I've come to interview Joseph Fiennes."

"I'm sorry, Miss Filler," said some jumped-up jobsworth. "He waited for an hour, but then he had to go. He sends his apologies."

Men. They are all the same. Rude, useless and unreliable. At least I didn't have to put up with one of them droning on about himself for an hour!

© Polly Filler

TV Pick of the week

Princess Monica talks to Jon Snow

Channel 4

Snow: Your Highness, thank you for giving me the time.

Monica: Thank you for giving me the money.

Snow: Ha ha ha. Do you think President Clinton is constitutionally unfit to be head of the Church of England?

Monica: It's sad to have to say this, Mr Bashir, but he is a bastard.

Snow: I gather, Your Highness, that you suffer from an eating disorder.

Monica: I thought we weren't going to talk about the oral sex.

Snow: Ha ha ha ha ha ha. Do you think, Louise, that the media decided you were guilty even before the trial?

Monica: The President and I were very much in love. Or, at least, I was.

Snow: Ha ha ha. And I gather Andrew Morton has written a book about you called *Monica: Her True Story*?

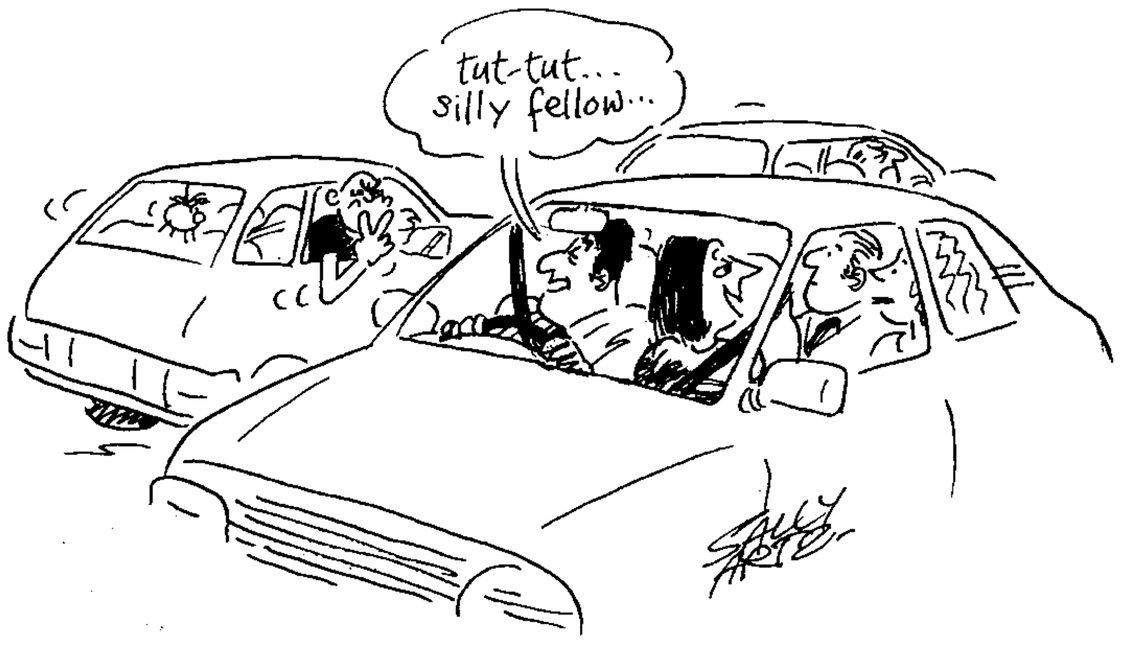
Monica: It's £18.99 from all good bookstores.

Snow: How would you like to be remembered?

Monica: I'd like people to think of me as The Queen of Tarts.

Snow: Thank you very much indeed.

© Channel Four Hundred Thousand Pounds



"We can't thank Roadragers Anonymous enough"

YES, IT'S LONDON FASHIST WEEK!

by Our Style Correspondent James Brownshirt

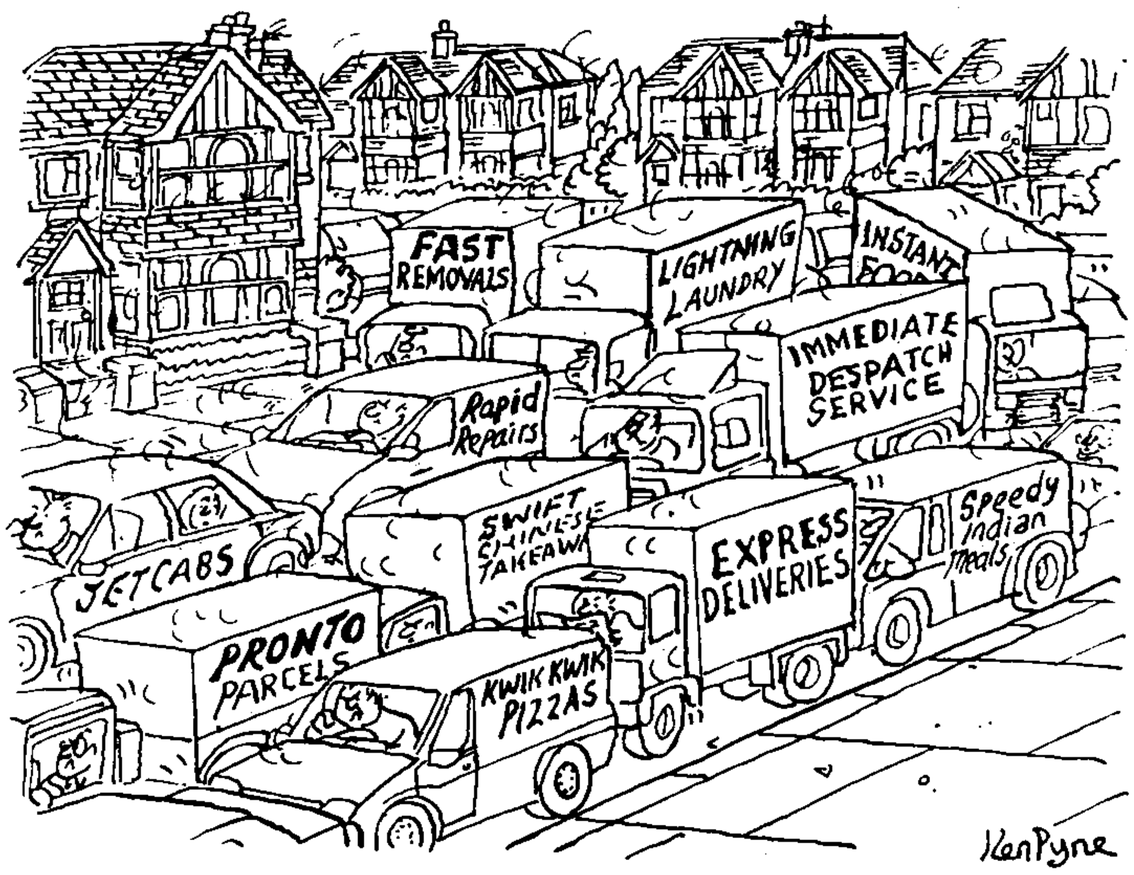
ONCE again, London has proved it's the fashist capital of the world with a stunning display of young fashist talent!

And this year's look is already creating a sensation. Scruffy jeans topped with casual shirts (check or plain), all topped with matching de rigueur sunglasses.

As they swaggered down the sidewalk you could hear the "oohs" and "aahs" from the assembled reporters.

And then came the show-stopping finale. Dressed in dark blue serge with silver buttons and stylish pointed helmet, a group of young men proudly showed off the latest fashism from the streets. Produced by veteran design house the Metropolitan Police, this stunning collection was hailed by critics as "a disgrace to any civilised society" *(cont. p. 94)*

"Harvesting already, I see..."



Radio 4 **Today:** What You Missed...

John Humphreys *(for it is he)*: Clement Freud, you knew the late Derek Nimmo. Can you describe the kind of man he was?

Fraud: Derek was a most wonderful man. And a truly wonderful comic actor.

(Buzzer sounds)

Voice of Listener: Repetition of "wonderful".

Humbug: Over to Nicholas Parsons.

Parsons: I knew Derek very well. He was... er...

(Buzzer)

Voice of Listener: Hesitation.

Humbug: Well spotted. And Clement, that gives you 53 seconds left, still on the subject of Derek Nimmo.

Freud: I remember once when we were doing the show in Skegness, and we'd had a particularly good lunch with Kenneth Williams...

(Buzzer)

Voice of Listener: Deviation.

Humbug: Yes, I'll allow that. And, oh, the final whistle's blown.. *(Whistle blows)* ...So, that's it for Derek, and now it's over to Sue McGhastly for an update on the Kurdish crisis.

Sue McGaga: And in the studio to discuss the Kurdish problem we have Professor Norman Stone, the Reader of Modern Whiskey Labels at the University of Ankara, and the distinguished playright and wearer of black polo necks, Mr Harold Pinter.

Professor Stone, if I could come to you first...

Stoned *(for it is he)*: Bloody Kurds. Load of trouble-makers, if you ask me, guv. Dancing round the streets, bangin' their drums, keeping honest Turkish folk awake. Know what I'd do with that Acalan? I'd string 'im up, which is what my Turkish friends are going to do with him anyway. I 'ad a bottle of whiskey in the back of the cab on the way here. Went down a treat.

(Very long menacing pause)

Pinter: ...You bastard!

McGaga: And now it's time for the weather. There are going to be scattered showers in Scotland, aren't there?

Weathergirl: That's right, Sue...

The home side tried to hit back and on 70 minutes, another corner caused confusion in the Blakenall area and once again Bevan squeezed a shit in, but this time it trickled harmlessly into the arms of Willetts.

Gloucester Citizen

'EURO IS TOTALLY SAFE' promises Blair 'I EAT IT EVERY DAY'

by Our Financial Staff **G.M. O'Booze**

PRIME Minister Tony Blair yesterday assured the British public that the euro posed no danger to the health of the nation.

"Our scientists have looked at this pretty carefully," he told MPs in an article in the Daily Telegraph written by Alistair Campbell, "and the product has already undergone the most rigorous testing in Europe for over two months."

YOU SAY TOMATO, I SAY FISH

"I personally would have no hesitation in giving it to my children," the Prime Minister pledged.

But Tory leader William Hague was quick to attack the government's position, calling for a moratorium for ten years until scientists have proved that there is no danger to British consumers.

NEW LABEL, NEW DANGER

However, a CBI spokesman Ablair Turner said, "It is too late to turn the clock back to the bad old days of the pound.

"Already millions of people are using the euro, even though they don't know it," he claimed. "The euro is already here, in supermarkets, in banks and in my imagination, and we should accept it as inevitable."

But consumer groups have made it clear that they wish to have a choice on whether to consume euros or not.

"We want money clearly labelled," said the Institute of Directors, "so that consumers know whether it is pounds or it is euros that they are getting in their salary cheque."

STOP PRESS

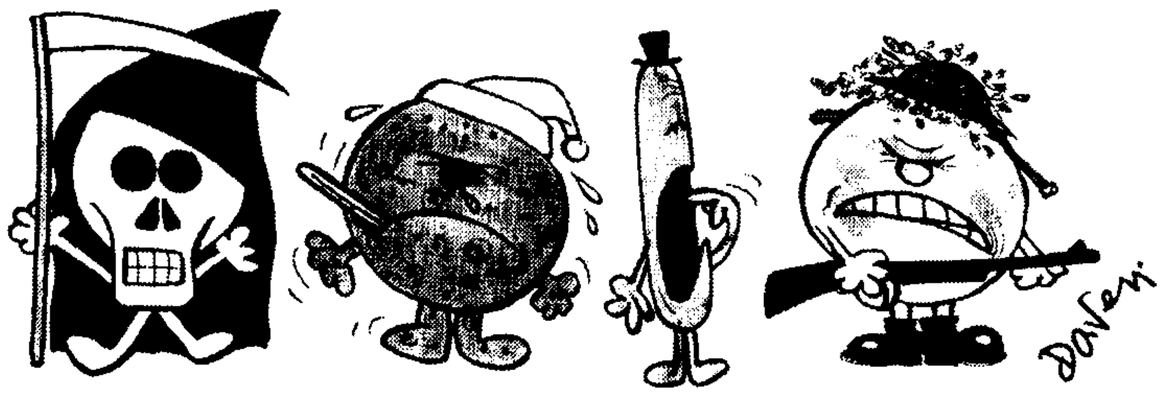
Man Turned Into Vegetable By Euro, Scientists Claim

A WEALTHY Henley pensioner today woke up to find that he had turned into a Labour supporter, after a lifetime as a normal, healthy Conservative.

Mr Michael Heseltine, 87, is believed to be the first victim of politically modified Brussels Sprouts.

Said his wife, "When he went to bed last night he was perfectly alright.

But when Howard the butler took him his cup of tea this morning, he was sitting there gibbering about the euro and saying that Blair was a great national leader."



The Four Mr Men of the Apocalypse

PLAGIARISM SCANDAL OF THE CENTURY ROCKS NO ONE AT ALL

by Our Literary Staff
Princess Michael Ignatieff

THE WORLD of popular history was rocked to its foundations yesterday, when world-famous historian Lady Magnesia Freelove claimed that another author had plagiarised her immortal masterpiece, *Mary Queen of Scones.*

She drew attention to the "astonishing similarity" between her own book and the recent book of the same title written by Professor Peter McHackey, described by his publishers on the dustjacket as "the world's worst historian".

How The Texts Compare

Lady Magnesia

"On the morning of August 3 1567, the sun shone brightly. For Mary Queen of Scots it was a big day. She was going to have her head chopped off, and go down in history as a tragic heroine who in centuries to come would inspire a brilliant biography by a woman even more beautiful, talented and well-connected than Mary herself."

Prof McHackey

"On the morning of Sept 5, 1954, it was a beautiful day in bonny Scotland. For Mary Queen of Scots it was a day she would never forget. She was about to lose her head. And this would put her in the history books as a truly tragic heroine, who would one day, hundreds of years later, inspire a brilliant biography by a great Scottish historian. Isn't life fine and dandy?"

IS IT PLAGIARISM? **You decide** ***(tick box)***

- ☐ **A.** He's nicked from her
- ☐ **B.** She nicked it from someone else
- ☐ **C.** Who cares?

HEATH'S PRIVATE VIEW

THE VAGINA MONOLOGUES
WITH EVE ENSLER
OH MY GOD! MUSHBOX! NAPPY DUG OUT!
HOME MADE PUSSY!
IF YOUR VAGINA COULD SPEAK WHAT WOULD YOU WANT IT TO SAY? TAKE A GOOD LOOK AT IT GIRLS...
THIS SHOULD BE ON CHANNEL 4
..GET A HAND MIRROR! PUT THE LIGHTS ON...
SLOW DOWN THAT'S WHAT IT WOULD SAY!
WOW! WEE!
IF ONLY MY MOTHER COULD HAVE HEARD ALL THIS!
I MET THIS 72 YEAR OLD WOMAN AT THE VAGINA WORK SHOP! SHE'D NEVER HAD AN ORGASAM! CAN YOU IMAGINE??!
..DIFFERENT TYPES OF ORGAS
OOOOH! YES! YES! YES! EEE! OW! GRUNT GRUNT! AND THE ENGLISH ONE- NO SOUND AT ALL!
WOW!
SHRIEK!
MUMMY!
AT LAST! MY VAGINA HAS A VOICE!
DON'T YOU LOVE THE C WORD?
NO SMOKING
KINGS HEAD
MEMBERS ONLY
FULL
COMING SOON
FANNY BY GAS LIGHT
SAVE OUR GRANT !!!!
THIS ONE WILL RUN AND RUN
WE'RE LOOKING FOR VAGINAS ON SEATS

DIARY

GERMAINE GREER

For Chrissake, the hypocrisy out there is so gross that sometimes I can't BREATHE. As one of the only women in this godforsaken country permitted to nurture her own land, I know this only too bloody well. 58% of men disapprove of women who garden, and another 49% positively hate them. Only the other day, I was in the vegetable patch, placing condoms on the aubergines for greater protection from the devastating east wind, when to my horror I heard a buzzing noise coming from my hat. I then discovered that I had a bee in my bonnet, for God's sake, and I couldn't get rid of it. To my amazement, the manufacturers had failed to place any hole in the bonnet for the bee to exit through. This is because manufacturers of women's headwear rejoice in women being stung, so that they can then hand them over to doctors, who can in turn torture them for no better purpose than the enactment of control.

And another thing — the stone in my shoe. It's been there for six months, for Chrissake, and no one's done a bloody thing about it. Every time I put my shoe on, there it is again. In our "enlightened" society, women are indoctrinated not to complain when there's a stone in their shoe. Instead, they're forced to choose between a stone in their shoe – or a stone in their shoe. What kind of choice is that? At the end of the Millennium, there's simply no choice, stonewise. It makes me very angry – and I'm darned if I'm going to take it any more.

It doesn't take a genius to guess that the electric toaster was designed by a man. Why? Because it's lousy for putting in the dishwasher. Every time I put my electric toaster in the dishwasher, it fucks up, and I have to go out and buy another one for Chrissake. For 92% of men, the dishwasher is merely a means of irreparably damaging toasters, leaving their wives to toast bread by hand, leading to 33% body burns, and bogus research suggests that a further 17% have attempted at some point in their married lives to stack their wives in a dishwasher before turning the knob to Rinse. It's even been said that women are sexually turned on by the dishwashing cycle. Oh yeah? This kind of made-up statement makes me hopping mad. How DARE anyone give it the time of day – let alone repeat it in print? How DARE they? And any woman who has tried boiling fresh organic vegetables in a household toaster by pouring in the water, throwing in the veg and pressing down the button will have been brought face-to-face with a world eco-system primed to destroy their self-confidence. Even in 1999, 98% of those who still wear dresses are female. Just think about it – and SEETHE.

How many more times do I have to say it, for Chrissake? Women of a certain age are totally ignored by the British media. We are forced to endure endless hardship, grief and pain, our mouths ruthlessly gagged by a world system balanced against us. I've said it over and over again — on Question Time, The Late Show, an Omnibus Special, on Radios 1, 2, 3 and 4, Newsnight, in every newspaper from the Mirror to the Telegraph and on a 6 part series for Channel 4 – but do they listen? Do they heck.

Close study of my farmyard geese has taught me an awful lot about men. Before I studied geese, I had no idea that men were so totally obsessed with waddling about, moving their necks to and fro and quacking all the time. This is real and pervasive and obvious. Not until we have stopped men behaving like geese will we able to call ourselves fully human.

At the end of the Millennium, contempt for the mother has assumed a new dimension. In Hitchcock's movie "Psycho" the hero dresses up as his mother before performing his/her murders. In the Tintin books the mother of the eponymous hero is totally and damningly ignored – in over 17,500 pictures, spanning 23 books, she never once appears. On Brookside, the mothers tend to be older than their daughters, and in the recent movie of The Titanic, we are repeatedly reminded that the heroine is not a mother, and thus – it is cruelly implied – all the more worthy of our admiration. Meanwhile, scores of mothers are thrown overboard and drowned. Male psychologists from the University of Misogyny tell us that men would make much better mothers – but then they would, wouldn't they? For Chrissake, I've spent a lifetime travelling this vast universe of ours, my feet clad in nothing but shoes, in search of a mother who is accorded her proper respect. I say a lifetime, and it would have been a lifetime but for the repeated and WHOLLY UNNECESSARY, DAMMIT interruptions from my selfish, useless, carping old ma in Sydney. SHUT YOUR EFFING GOB, MUM! Doesn't she have any thought for others? Doesn't she realise I've got important work to do? Who the hell does she think she is? Frankly, I've got nothing but contempt for her type. It's time to get angry, very angry.

The penis is suffering from a severe personality disorder. Once it was admired, even coveted, by women, but now it's an object of pity and contempt. What's it FOR, for Chrissake? It's no good as a tent-peg, and useless as a hoe. Those who have tried using it as a chimney-brush have been bitterly disappointed, and it is quite simple unable to withstand the heat for stirring soups and casseroles. Like 79% women, I can no longer be bothered to find house-room for the penis. Women of the Ohokeykokeykoki and Tararabumdeeyay tribes of Central Africa have taught me that it can make an effective table decoration on those long winter evenings. I might try it next year. Through their peasant wisdom, we arrive at contentment.

Together, we feminists can change the world. Our values are sanity, calm and a profound connection with the earth. Together, we can make this world a better place, a world of unity and companionship. But I'm not talking about you, Fay Weldon. Or you, Natasha Walters. And certainly not you, Suzanne effing Moore. And you can piss off too, Ros Coward. And you. And you. And you. Thanks for bloody nothing. Is there no one other than me who's prepared to do as I say? I guess I'll have to promote unity all by myself, then. God, it makes me ANGRY. Men!!!

YOU LOOK WORRIED, SIR. REALLY WORRIED.
I KNOW, JOHNSON. I KNOW.
IT'S MY AGE I GUESS. I JUST HATE THE FACT THAT I'M GETTING OLDER.
AND I REALLY DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT, JOHNSON
PERHAPS I COULD PROFFER A FEW WORDS OF ADVICE...
A BOTOX INJECTION WILL SMOOTH OUT THAT WRINKLED FOREHEAD... TAKE YEARS OFF YOU...
BRILLIANT, JOHNSON. YOU WISE OLD OWL.

Literary Review

Julie, Badly, Cheaply

Married Alive
Julie Burchill
(Orion, £12.99)

EVERYONE loves a comeback. The great star, reduced by circumstance to virtual penury, moving away, sorting herself out and becoming a great star all over again — it's the stuff of legend and would make a wonderful film, maybe starring Vanessa Feltz.

In decades to come small children will beg their parents to tell them the story of Julie Burchill. Did she really come to London at the age of 17 to transform music journalism singlehandedly? Did she then churn out facile right-wing bilge throughout the 1980s for a salary only slightly smaller than Stewart Steven's? And did she finally reemerge, having eaten all the pies, to write a much-flicked-past column in Saturday's *Guardian*? "Again, again!" cry the small children, "Tell us about Julie again!"

But then this is the way Julie sees her dedicated readership — as small children, to whom no story can be told too many times. She has the one subject — herself — and she explores it in almost infinite detail. Over the years we have read about her in her columns, we have read about her in her novels, we have read about her in her charming autobiography *I Knew I Was Right*, and we have read about her in her book about Princess Diana, which wasn't really about Princess Diana at all. Last week we saw her in a documentary on TV, skipping daintily around the streets of Brighton, and now we can read the reviews of her new novel, *Married Alive*. Some of us might even read the novel itself, although I wouldn't recommend it.

The narrator Nicole is a hard-living, garrulous, up-for-it 1990s stereotype with a loft conversion in Docklands and a bad snuffle that never goes away. Her husband is sexy and wonderful — and therefore destined to be revealed as a shit before long — but at first her life is blighted by the arrival of her grandmother, whom she rescues from the indignity of an old people's home. Then, to quote the characteristically lazy jacket copy, "things go from bad to worse".

Anyone who reads Chapter One might find this hard to imagine. Burchill famously writes her journalism in bursts of crazed inspiration. She starts with an empty sheet of paper and a glass of champagne; two hours later she has a completed piece and she is never quite sure where it has come from. This is convenient, because some of it usually turns out to have come from previous pieces. On page 8 of *Married Alive*, she writes: "She wasn't exactly Einstein, my mum, or even Epstein." Have we heard this before? Like much of the book, it feels oddly, almost comfortingly familiar.

But then the whole of *Married Alive* reads as though it was written in one long surge of creativity, possibly lasting as long as a single day. Burchill is no fool. She realises that you can't write an entire novel in the tone of a flip, knowing newspaper column. But she clearly has nothing else to offer so she does it anyway. Out it rolls, a relentless tidal wave of opinion, decorated by painful puns and amazingly annoying avalanches of alliteration (not to mention manifold mixed metaphors). Plot cannot stand in its way; characterisation is swiftly overcome. Nicole the narrator is just an alter ego, while everybody else just stands around fulfilling pre-assigned roles. There's nothing remotely human about the book, nothing that reflects real life as anyone has ever lived it.

What is the point of this book? As the TV documentary demonstrated, and she herself has admitted, Burchill has no great interest in real life and none at all in other people. Her solipsism is absolute. This is fine in a newspaper columnist: indeed, in the current climate it's probably a pre-requisite. But it's disastrous in anyone who wants to write novels. What are novels about, if they are not about other people? *Married Alive* is a strikingly poor piece of work, as hard to read as no doubt it was easy to write. Even small children won't buy it.

Books & Bookmen

■ CENTURY is advertising Cliff Goodwin's *When The Wind Changed* as the "first ever detailed and authoritative biography" of Tony Hancock. First ever? Hardly.

In its eagerness to puff Goodwin's book the publisher appears to have forgotten about *Hancock*, a thorough and unsentimental account of the comic's troubled life written by David Nathan and Hancock's widow Freddie, which first hit the shops in 1969 and has been reprinted countless times since.

Even less understandable, however, is Century's apparent unawareness of *Tony Hancock: Artiste*, Roger Wilmut's exhaustive survey of Hancock's stage, screen and radio career, which was published by Methuen in 1978. Although Methuen has been independent of Random House for some time now, it continues to operate from the same Vauxhall Bridge Road premises as, er, Century.

■ ACCORDING to the press handout, Sir Edward Heath was "delighted" to receive the politico's book of the year prize at the *House Magazine*/Channel 4 Parliamentary Awards for *The Course of my Life*.

While it strains credulity to imagine the grumpy old Grocer delighted with anything, booksellers all over the country are a long way from sharing his glee. Mountains of his tedious tome clutter their stockrooms waiting to be returned to Hodder & Stoughton.

An executive from one of the underbidders for the book was recently overheard expressing relief that Hodder had beaten them to it. "Thank God we missed out," the happy publisher observed. "They will never recoup the outlay." A marginally kinder assessment than the joke currently doing the rounds in the trade, which suggests that the Grocer should instead have written the book during the three-day week, as the many unsold copies would have made a more than adequate alternative to coal during the energy crisis.

■ "LIZ CALDER, co-founder of Bloomsbury, has simply decided to take life easier, whatever the gossip-ridden world of publishing may say... just to set those rumours to rest."

So said the *Times* books pages

on 25 February, slapping down spiteful rumours that Calder was being "eased out" to be "replaced by someone more able to 'pull in the young talent' ". And where had these scurrilous whisperings appeared? Er, in the *Times* diary of 24 February!

'Bookworm'

O·B·N

We get inside the victim, the hunted animal, which is Monica Lewinsky. It was a gripping experience... she is absolutely raw and herself and she has tremendous television presence... When I first asked to interview her, I thought, 'God, how am I going to sustain an hour?' I could have done 24.

JON SNOW
Daily Mail

£10 paid for entries put forward for the Order of the Brown Nose.

REMAINDERS OF THE DAY

THE BOOK: *Second Act* by Joan Collins
THE ADVANCE: Not unadjacent to £200,000
THE HYPE: "A captivating, hilarious, and very revealing insider's life story" — ie a collection of tiresome luvvie/bitchy anecdotes about tiresome luvvies and bitches with whom la Collins has worked.
THE PRICE: Originally published by Boxtree at £17.99. Several hardback *signed* copies, last seen in the Original Bookshop, Soho, for £1.99 each.
THE MORAL: No one is interested in "insider stories" from has-beens. Except, it seems, for publishers, as Andre Deutsch is now attempting to drum up some trade for a worryingly similar project, called *My Friends' Secrets*. The author? Joan Collins.

footnotes

BIWATER OF BABYLON

A LIKELY if surprising casualty of the recent bombing of Iraqi military sites by British bombers is a plant set up in the Baghdad suburb of Al Taji by a former subsidiary of the big British multinational, Biwater. Neither the subsidiary nor the plant nor Biwater was mentioned in the three-year Scott inquiry into the export of defence equipment to Iraq.

The plant was commissioned in December 1988, a month of frantic British industrial effort to sell into the expanding market in Iraq. In August 1988 a ceasefire had put an end to the long war between Iraq and Iran, during which the western powers had increasingly sided with Iraq and its dictator, Saddam Hussein. Hussein made it clear that during the peace he would be building up his armed forces. The British authorities, in spite of an official arms embargo on Iraq, were keen to help.

In September Britain's powerful joint intelligence committee (JIC), regularly attended by prime minister Margaret Thatcher, discussed the new situation in Iraq and concluded: "The way forward over the next six months will be to release more defence equipment." The way forward was cleared still further on 21 December 1988 when a meeting of three ministers — Alan Clark, (trade and industry); Lord Trefgarne (defence); and William Waldegrave (foreign office) — agreed to change the guidelines to make the sale of defence equipment to Iraq much easier.

At almost exactly the same time, a Cheshire company called Chemical and Thermal Engineering, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Biwater, was commissioned to build a resin plant for Iraq. This was described as a "tremendous breakthrough" in the company's report. The Iraqi commissioning agent was the Technical Corps for Special Projects, known as TECO or Tech Corps, which was controlled by Saddam's late son-in-law.

The location for the plant was Al Taji, an industrial suburb just north of Baghdad. The deal was funded by a letter of credit issued from the Atlanta branch of the Italian Banca Nazionale del Lavoro (BNL), which supplied apparently unlimited loans to finance Iraq's military expansion.

A huge batch of such loans was issued by BNL Atlanta to companies supplying Tech Corps on 23 December 1988. Asked much later about the unusual source of finance for his company's plant in Iraq, Adrian White, chairman of Biwater, was quoted as saying: "We were well aware that the finance came from BNL. It was suggested to us by our client, Tech Corps, when our normal UK banks could not help quickly enough" (*Observer* 14 April 1991).

MR ADRIAN WHITE CBE

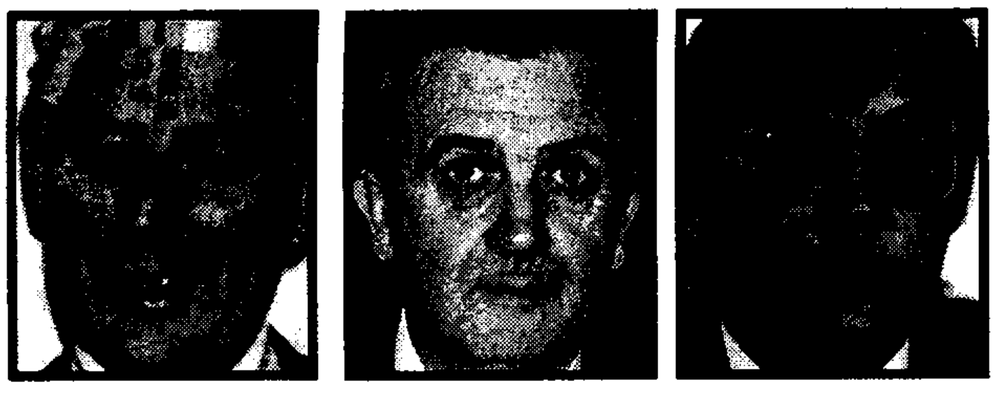
Also in December 1988, the secret British intelligence service MI6 drafted a 15-page memo on European weapons procurement networks dealing with Argentina, Egypt and Iraq. The memo revealed that the Technical Corps for Special Projects was responsible for the Iraqi missile programme.

The project number for the Chemical and Thermal Engineering export was 65/1937. Biwater says the project was renumbered because the number 65 had been allocated to a fibre glass factory, also at Al Taji, a kilometre away from the resin plant. This factory was being exported at exactly the same time by the American subsidiary of the British engineering firm Matrix Churchill, which later became the focus of the arms to Iraq inquiry.

The Biwater resin plant came on stream before Saddam's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990. By that time British enthusiasm for exporting to Saddam's Iraq was fading. In January 1990 the ministry of defence had warned the foreign office that Tech Corps "has been involved in the procurement of CW (chemical warfare) agent precursors". Then, on 2 April 1990, Saddam boasted publicly that "Iraq's chemical weapons capability is matched only by the United States and the Soviet Union".

Three days after the speech Leslie Jones, a senior Biwater director, resigned from the board of Chemical and Thermal Engineeering. In October 1990, as troops massed in the desert for an attack on Iraq, Chemical and Thermal Engineering changed its name to Biwater Process Plant. The company report for the year moaned: "All of the company's incomplete contracts with Iraq are considered to be effectively terminated."

In February 1991, even before the hot war in the Gulf was over, Biwater chairman Adrian White visited Kuwait, which had just been evacuated by Saddam's troops. Mr White led a group of British businessmen seeking reconstruction orders in Kuwait.



MPs FOR BIWATER: Michael Grylls, Tristan Garel-Jones, David Mellor

Meanwhile what was going on at the new plant in Al Taji? Biwater's answer is simple: it was designed to manufacture synthetic resins for making paint and enamel. Built into the plant was a nitrogen generation unit whose purpose was to prevent the oxidisation of resin products during storage. Any military use for the plant was, the firm insists, inconceivable. It adds that the export was fully approved by the department of trade and industry (DTI) at a time when Britain and the other western powers were friendly with Saddam Hussein.

A rather different picture about Iraqi intentions for the plant emerged in detailed US government hearings into the BNL banking scandal which followed a raid by the FBI on the bank's Atlanta offices in August 1989.

The hearings were conducted by the House of Representatives' banking committee under the chairmanship of congressman Henry Gonzalez. In April 1991 Gonzalez named Biwater as a UK company receiving BNL money. On 27 July 1992, he revealed that TECO (Tech Corps) "was responsible for Iraq's highest-priority clandestine missile and nuclear programmes". Four days later he read into the congressional record a long list of what he said were military installations built and exported with the help of finance from BNL, Atlanta. The list included:

"Technical Corps for Special Projects (TECO), Project 65/Project 1937, Baghdad. Biwater Process Plant/Chemical and Thermal Engineering Ltd, Adderly Rd, Wilmslow, Cheshire, £16,894,383, nitrogen generation plant parts, cryogenic nitrogen plant, resin factory to be used with glass fiber factory to make components for missiles, aircraft etc". This glass fibre factory was identified by the congressman as "Project 3128, Matrix Churchill, 5930 Harper Road, Cleveland, Ohio, $14,100,000 fiber glass project".

The point the congressman was making was this. Some combinations of resin and glass fibre can be used to toughen up the nose cones and casings of missiles. So the export of some resin-fibre composites was banned under the Missile Technology Control Regime, which the US and Britain signed in 1987. This regime, however, did not prevent the export of separate resin and fibre plants which when combined could assist a missile programme.

CONGRESSMAN GONZALEZ

Last October, as the prospect loomed of renewed British and American bombing of Iraq, the Liverpool-based researcher Greg Dropkin was studying the Gonzalez hearings when he came across the references to the former Biwater plant in Iraq. He bombarded the International Atomic Energy Agency and the United Nations weapons inspectorate UNSCOM with questions about it. After a long correspondence, the IAEA disclosed that project 1937 is now a "partly operational epoxy resin plant" at Thaet Al Sawari in Al Taji — "a site that is subject to monitoring under the nuclear programme". Project 65, they revealed, is now "an unfinished explosive-related project" at Al Qa Qaa in Al-Hillah, south of Baghdad. UNSCOM told Dropkin that it knows of and is monitoring only one resin plant in Iraq, an epoxy resin plant at Al Wathik, also in Al Taji.

The *Eye* turned to the company. In a long letter to Mr Adrian White on 26 January, we set out the facts in this article which directly concern his company and asked a number of

questions about them. Perhaps not surprisingly, since the *Eye* had been involved in libel proceedings with Biwater in the past, and had apologised and paid damages, the answers came from Biwater's lawyers, Peter Carter-Ruck and Partners. They were dated 19 February and marked "for your information only and strictly on the basis that it [the information provided] is not for publication or distribution to a third party in any form".

Puzzled by this, the *Eye* has used the substance of Biwater's answers without quoting the exact words in Messrs Carter-Ruck's letter, or using any information in it which is not available elsewhere. The gist of the reply, most of which is set out above, is that Biwater confirms the commissioning of a Chemical and Thermal Engineering resin plant at Al Taji in December 1988; that it was a synthetic resin plant with a nitrogen generation unit, which had no conceivable military purpose; that the plant was initially called Project 65 which was later changed to 1937; that the plant was exported with the full permission of the British government; that the Biwater company lost contact with the plant after it came on stream before the Gulf conflict in 1990; and that the plant it constructed was not capable of producing epoxy resin.

Some *Eye* questions were not addressed at all in the Carter-Ruck response. For instance, the *Eye* asked: "Were any of these exports insured by the Export Credit Guarantee Department and, if so, did the ECGD have to pay out for them?" To this there was no reply. Mr Adrian White of Biwater is a strong supporter of the ECGD. In an ECGD newsletter last year he wrote a "personal view", which began as follows: "Frustrating though the requirements are to fulfil ECGD's necessarily detailed forms, few companies complain when they are paid out by the Department for unpaid bills by an African state or when caught out, for example, in the Gulf War". The total amount paid out by the taxpayer via the ECGD for exports to Saddam's Iraq before the 1991 Gulf War was estimated at £900m.

The *Eye*'s final question was: "Has your company been in touch with the military authorities in connection with the possible bombing of these sites?" To that question there was no reply.

Biwater grew rapidly in the 1980s and 1990s into a major multinational. It has supplied massive water projects to Malaysia and Nigeria and is currently bidding for a large privatised water contract in South Africa. At different times in recent years the company has had the benefit of paid advice from distinguished Tory MPs such as Michael Grylls, David Mellor and Tristan Garel-Jones. In 1993 Mr White was awarded the CBE and in 1995 was appointed a governor of the BBC.

Championing the Wonder Drug

WHEN Andrew Millar was sacked as clinical research director of British Biotech nearly a year ago, the company heralded his departure with a spate of poisonous press releases.

On 20 April Dr Millar's views were said to be "of no substance". On 27 April they "reflected purely personal opinions". On 29 April he was denounced by chairman John Raisman as "ill-informed and irresponsible". In evidence to the Commons science and technology committee on 28 July last year, British Biotech's former medical director Peter Lewis FRCP explained what was wrong with Andrew Millar. "He is intelligent, ambitious and articulate. However, he does not respect authority."

Dr Millar had dared to suggest that the results of the company's study into its anti-cancer wonder drug marimastat would a) not be good enough to get on the market and b) showed that the dose used in all the other trials was too low.

DR ANDREW MILLAR

If they had listened to their clinical director, British Biotech executives could have changed the trials and raised the dose. Instead they preferred to sack him for not respecting authority.

Whoops! On 15 February this year, the results of the marimastat trials were announced. They were a) not good enough to get on the market and b) showed that the dose used in all the other trials was too low. By this time it was too late to do anything about it, and nine trials with 200 patients each are obliged to stumble on with ineffective doses.

Announcing these results, the company's chief medical officer Peder Jensen commented: "Dr Millar just happened to be right." It was, he said, "purely by chance" that Millar's predictions had come true.

Dr Millar's capacity for good fortune may soon be on parade again. Eighteen months ago he predicted that the trials into British Biotech's only other wonder drug, Zacutex, for treating pancreatitis, would fail; and advised the company to cut its losses in Zacutex and research other areas. This advice from the wayward clinical director was treated with the usual contempt and the huge spending (about £30m) on Zacutex continued.

Whoops! The results of the Zacutex trials are due — and not everyone in what is one of the country's most optimistic companies is banking on a triumph.

What British Biotech lacks in scientific achievement, however, it makes up for in public relations triumphs. On Monday 8 February the *Daily Telegraph* City journalist Andrew Clark reported on a historic visit to British Biotech's Oxford headquarters — "a red glass-and-chrome construction that puts most of its more successful corporate neighbours to shame". Clark noted "an open and transparent culture" symbolised by "weekly breakfasts" for the workers with their new chief executive Dr Elliot Goldstein. Said Goldstein: "I want people to feel they can challenge things and bring up their own points of view." He did not mention the fact that his company is suing Dr Millar for challenging things and bringing up his point of view.

Research director Alan Drummond drooled: "This is a fun place — it's always been a fun place to work. People still want to come here because our technology is admired in the industry."

Such is the pulling power of the *Daily Telegraph* with share-dealing punters that Clark's drivel on its own was enough to drive up the share price by 10 percent. Whoops! Six days later came the bad news about marimastat. The share price plunged 17 percent and is still falling.

It could be you, Squire

LUCKY LOSER: Robin Squire

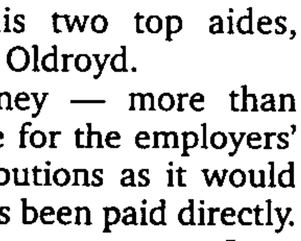
THE press release from Chris Smith, secretary of state for culture, media and sport, announcing yet another new quango called the lottery commission, took a lot of space boasting that the new commissioners are non-political.

Hilary Blume, director of the Charities Advisory Trust, "has not carried out any party political activity in the last five years", boasted the release. Nor, it went on, has Brian Pomeroy, of Deloitte and Touche Consulting Group, or Helena Shovelton of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, or Harriet Spicer, a former publisher. Four out of four are non-political. But wait. Who is the fifth?

He is Robin Squire who carried out rather a lot of party political activity after being elected Tory MP for Hornchurch in 1979. Labour party supporters in Hornchurch, who worked hard to turn Squire's majority of 9,165 into a Labour majority of 5,680, are reported to be not entirely jubilant at the news of his appointment — especially as not one of them has been appointed to anything, not even a local health trust.

Since he is the only known Tory among the five, Squire is favourite to be chosen by the other four as commission chairman. The rules about payment of members of the new quango are rather more gentle than in the past. They are paid "daily fees" based on full-time annual salaries of £43,270 for members and £84,275 for chairmen. The members themselves decide how often they meet and therefore how much public money they get.

High Principals



GARDEN OF EADE

NOT long ago the corporation of governors of Barnsley College, Yorks, sat down to discuss a serious problem: how to dodge national insurance contributions.

They came up with a fine wheeze which was swiftly passed through the college lawyers. A special trust was set up into which were paid the performance bonuses of the three top college "postholders": chief executive David Eade and his two top aides, Michelle Squires and Ann Oldroyd.

Hey presto! The money — more than £20,000 — was not liable for the employers' national insurance contributions as it would have been had the bonuses been paid directly.

Whoops! Something went wrong. In a special circular to staff Mr Eade reveals two problems. Firstly: "Corporation members felt it (the scheme) was not at one with the values of the college" (ie they might not include dodging tax payments which go to pay for the National Health Service).

Secondly: "Administration arrangements were not satisfactory." This was believed to be a reference to the fact that the three postholders could not legally get their money out of the trust without borrowing it and paying it back at interest. The problems were insurmountable. The trust is being wound up and the whole tax dodge confined to oblivion.

PS: Barnsley College's "surplus on continuing operations" is sharply *down* from £1,002,000 last year to £192,000.

PPS: The "emoluments" of the Big Three postholders cost £249,428, slightly more than *four* senior postholders cost the college last year.

PPPS: Mr Eade's pay is *up* from £87,569 to £107,596.

PPPPS: The cost of paying teaching staff is *down* from £8,588,000 last year to £6,682,000.

You can write to Paul Foot at Carlisle Street, London W1V 5RG, or leave a message for him on 0171 287 3183

In the City

THE world of medicine should prepare itself for a remarkable genetic discovery — a gene which produces improper if not illegal share dealing behaviour, already dubbed by excited researchers and regulators as the Archer Syndrome. The possibility that buying the right shares at the wrong time could run in the family like wooden legs would have appeared fanciful were it not for the amazing family double achieved by the great storyteller Lord Archer — investigated and not cleared of insider dealing by British regulators — and his too upwardly mobile son James, the focus of market rigging investigations in London and Stockholm.

Jeffrey Archer was always fascinated by share dealing and inside information. This interest in the fast buck initially almost bankrupted him in the early 1970s when he was the victim of some real share sharks. But it then made his fortune when this experience formed the basis for his first novel. The rest is history if not literature.

Archer senior continued his interest in high risk, big reward share dealing once he was rich enough to make the plays look more like greed than need. On one occasion before the Anglia Television affair his name featured on the stock exchange regulatory radar screen although no action was taken.

Then came those two finely timed Anglia share deals in January 1994 which netted a near £80,000 profit for Archer's little Kurdish chum Broosk Saib. The fact that the fragrant Mary Archer was an Anglia director and had learned but not told Jeffrey of an imminent takeover bid from MAI soon had the Department of Timidity & Inaction on the case. The DTI inspectors' verdict was that there was insufficient evidence to guarantee a successful prosecution for insider trading.

Fast forward four years and enter Archer junior, like his father living large and making grandiose claims even at the tender age of 24 in his bid to join the City's big swinging dicks. Sadly due to the Archer Syndrome he has been revealed simply as a little prick.

The world first learned of James Archer and the so called Flaming Ferraris team from Credit Suisse First Boston of which he was very much a junior part courtesy of a shamelessly staged puff complete with photo opportunity — showing a knowingly smiling Archer and pals out on the town. This piece of what seemed then and has been shown since to be typical Archer fiction appeared in the *Sunday Hellograph* on December 20 last year.

Despite Archer's suspension and that of his two bosses, David Crasanti and Adrian Ezra (seen leading the dinner jacketed charge in the much reproduced ridiculous *Reservoir Dogs* photograph), the *Sunday Hellograph* is still sticking to its ludicrous December claims that the now burned out equity arbitrage dealers took £3bn gambles, made £100m for Credit Suisse and were set to share a £5m bonus. But then it's hard for the City's supposed most informed Sunday to put its hands up and say: "We were conned."

But how else to explain the fact that Archer junior would appear to have been caught trying to influence the main Swedish share index by aggressively 'short' selling shares in paper group Stora totalling no more than £540,000? Surely small change for the legendary Flaming Ferraris?

The name of the game would appear to have been by driving down the Stora price to impr0s contracts for buying or selling the index. The closing index figure on any market can be manipulated if one of the major constituents can be moved up or down. And that was all too possible in a small, thinly traded and volatile market like Stockholm with a big share such as Stora.

Such index manipulation is nothing new — like the great storytellers' books. Traders at J.P. Morgan were caught a year before trying to fix the FTSE100 index in London. The name of the game was the same: rig the index to improve the profit on an existing position and so boost that all important end year bonus.

Archer made his move on 29 December, a little over a week after the *Hellograph* puff and just before the books closed for the 1998 bonus. Like his father's purchases of Anglia shares, his selling of Stora was hardly likely to avoid detection by market regulators. Even modest but unusual trades in thin markets on a quiet day are there to be spotted and so they were. No doubt all calls by Archer to brokers in London or Stockholm were recorded? No doubt there are dealing records available to the team's CSFB compliance officer? No doubt CSFB are looking to see if this was the only instance of index rigging.

Crasanti and Ezra are said to have been suspended for failing to supervise young Master James, not for doing the share deals. But that begs the question: what did they know about what a very junior dealer on their supposed so hot shot team was doing? Presumably they would have shared in any bonus engendered by his deals. As they also gained from the publicity for the Flaming Ferraris even if the somewhat disingenuous *Hellograph* claimed they "shun publicity" and quoted Ezra as retorting when approached: "Leave me alone. I'm very busy."

Busy perhaps considering how the helpful *Hellograph*'s claim they were "the most successful share traders in the world" would enable the team to sell themselves to another City bank who believed what they had read for a salary and bonus package which would enable them to live the life of their Flaming Ferraris hype. Right now they and Archer look more like Forlorn Fiestas.

ONCE AGAIN all is far from well at corporate investigators Network, taken over last year with bankers Hambros by South African finance group Invesco. A boardroom row is said to have erupted between chief executive Fred Hohler and his new bosses over a proposed management buy-out. So much so that Hohler suddenly exited the company unannounced last month.

Hohler is said to have tried to buy what is left of Network after a steady stream of key defections for around £5m. This compares badly with the £14m at which Network is said to be in the Hambros' books and the even higher price offered two years ago by an Anglo-American consortium including Hohler's then employers Saladin. It is also well down on the around £8m at which an MBO was suggested last year.

But the South Africans were not best pleased when Hohler reportedly suddenly dropped his price to £3.5m unless he was allowed to do a due diligence investigation into the company he had been running! Negotiations were terminated at that point and so was Hohler's career at Network. The once leading City investigator is now up for sale as Invesco scrabbles to recover something from the wreckage — last year Network turned a £1.1m profit into a £337,000 loss.

"It's not everyday they shift 31 suits"

IS THE would-be "Lord Bernerd of South Bank" looking to spend more time with his money? Is his main backer Nina Wang in Hong Kong tiring of him and his costly non-property ventures and looking to cash in her Chelsfield chips? The property world is buzzing with rumours that Chelsfield might be for sale with Bernerd and Wang ready to offer a near third stake for starters. Down from 418p to 271p Chelsfield could be vulnerable to a bid from one of the bigger property players such as MEPC or Hammerson. Any bid would result in more than £100m finding its way to each of the offshore Bernerd and Wang interests. No doubt any such tax free killing will make the wannabe peer even more agreeable to his "new" Labour friends.

Wealth redistributor Tom Wilmot, the old Harvard Securities predator, found Peripheral Communications, a "shell" company on the US over the counter market, last year as a home for the assets from the crash of his car tracker promotion Skynet. The company, in which he but not the Skynet creditors is a happy shareholder, is now valued at around $50m.

Among the PC shareholders were the small Wall Street brokerage firm of Meyers Pollock who received 300,000 shares as a fee. It has since emerged that Meyers Pollock had been infiltrated by two New York Mafia families.

In January two senior figures in the Genovese and Bonnano crime families pleaded guilty to a 1997 share manipulation fraud carried out with brokers at Meyers Pollock. They and several brokers are charged with making millions by ramping the price of Healthtech International which was unloaded on to investors before the price plunged. Prosecutors termed the case the most serious known incident of the infiltration of Wall Street by organised crime.

Doubtless this all came as a great shock to Uncle Tom.

'Slicker'

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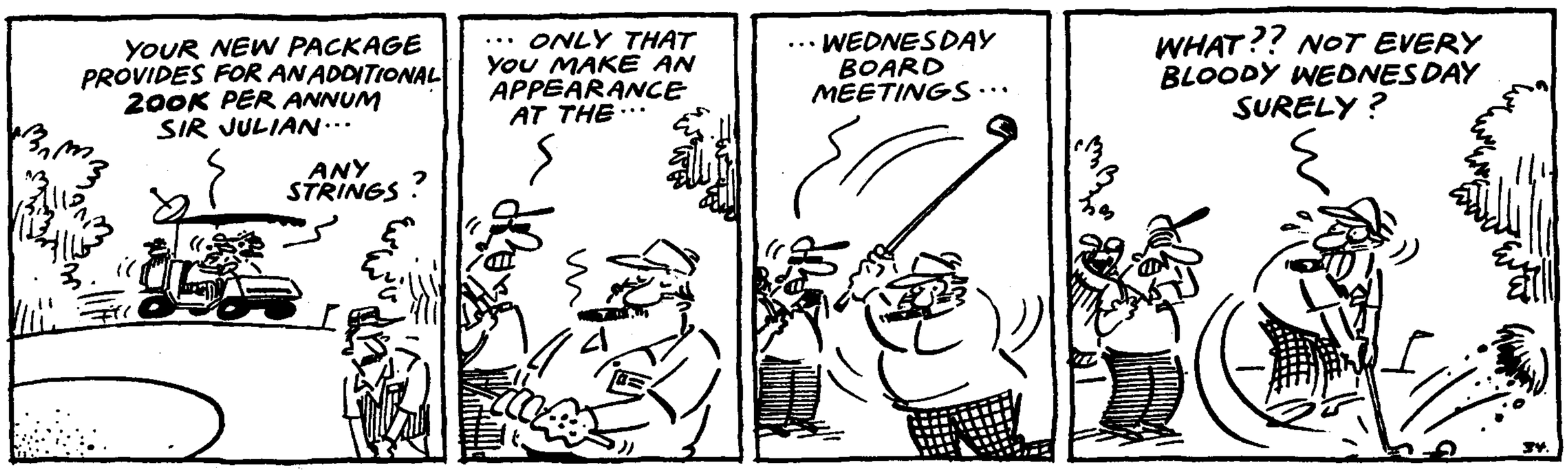
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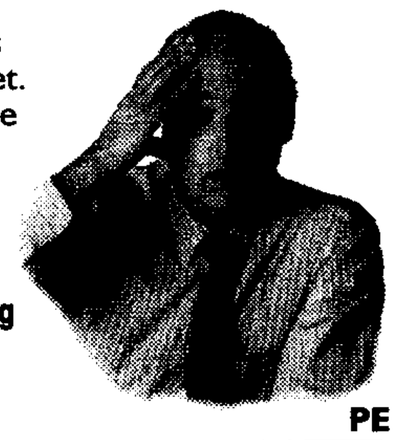

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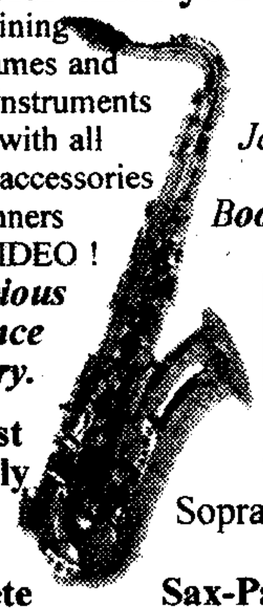

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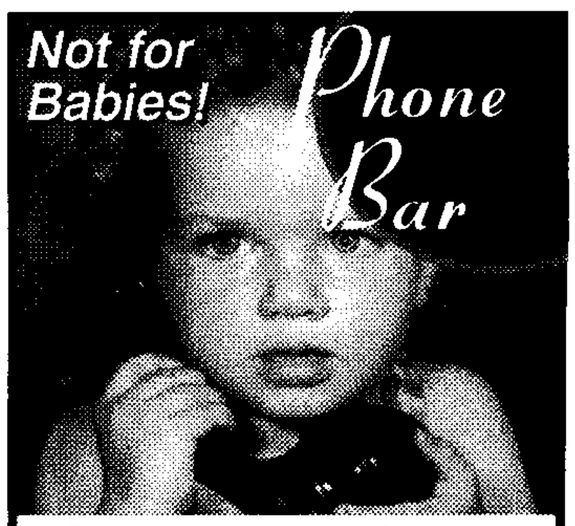

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CONTACT MAG for adults: over 900 photos. APPROVAL copy from: MATCHMAKER, (S.76), Chorley, PR7 4BS. Or ring: 01257 480155 (24 hours).

BEAUTIFUL RUSSIAN LADIES – personal introductions – exclusive contacts. OLGA EDWARDS, PO Box 56, Hyde, Cheshire. 0161 355 6841 (24 hrs).

ADULT PARTIES and events. Nationwide and local contacts – 01582 750947, PO Box 2097, Luton, LU3 2ZT. www.club-aphrodite.com

PLUMP PARTNERS – National Dating Agency. If you are plump or prefer a plump partner – ring 01352 715909.

EYE LOVE

WESTCOUNTRY WOMAN, 47, cynical, slim, lively, independent, smoker – seeks intelligent, witty, well adjusted man to share conversation and outings. Box 1971.

GENTLEMAN, 73, Oxford man, ex-Para, writing life-story, interested in books, politics, jazz – seeks lady friend. North Manchester. Box 1771.

WHITE, ATTRACTIVE,
SLIM, SINGLE MALE, 37,
very loving, affectionate,
hunts genuine lioness,
28-42 for roaring time.
01707 647520.
London area.

MALE, 50's, SLIM, FIT n/s, no ties – seeks slim lady 30-40ish, discretion assured – for loving, fun and laughs. Photo please. London/Kent. Box 1671.

SOMERSET MAN (45) – slim, fit, n/s, with beautiful country home, seeks sexy lady for liaisons anywhere in West. Box 1871.

FIT, FIRM, FRISKY, 55-year-old attached male, seeks lady soulmate to join him at the gym and/or elsewhere for exercise: Bucks/Oxon borders. Box 3671.

GRADUATE, 35. Married. Wife long term ill. Like sexual, sensible woman for understanding, escapes. Chester/Wirral. Box 3571.

SEX AND THE CITY. Handsome bachelor, professional, 34, London, seeks Carrie, Charlotte, Miranda, Samatha – for discreet passion. Box 3471.

SASSY SEXAGENARIENNE sought by sinful scribe for stately sarabands and strenuous soirées. London/ Wiltshire. Box 3371.

NEWCASTLE – FIT, romantic, caring male, single – wlmt Northern lady 30-45 York, Whitby, Scarborough, Carlisle, Richmond – any area for friendship, romance. Box 3271.

BLONDE, ATTRACTIVE, sporty, filly (34) – seeks tall, amusing, single man. Box 4570.

DOES MY FEMALE counterpart exist? Businessman mid forties, attached, happy, sporty, sophisticated, sensual – would like to meet a similar woman for a single (important) discreet, regular, happy, erotic, and sensual relationship. Enjoy wining/dining. Box 2769.

AMIABLE MALE, fifties, traces of wit and culture, occasionally assertive, WLTM intelligent, pleasant female for discreet, affectionate relationship. London/Essex. Box 2470.

FRUSTRATED BEACH BOY – early 30's. Struggling to cope with London. Knows why he is here, but missing his soul mate – lloyd1@bigfoot.com

SUBSTANTIALLY SINGLE, solvent, semi-cerebral six-foot Scot (40) seeks serendipity with scrumptious, svelte, sensuous siren (28+). London/North. Box 2771.

SHIRLEY VALENTINE: I've got the unspoilt Greek Island, the house, the boat, the car. So tell me – is my bed half full, or half empty? Box 3071.

NOW UNATTACHED SW London professional male, 38, seeks sensuous thirty-something intelligent brunette, ideally slim and fit, for fun and hopefully more. Photo ensures reply. Box 2971.

TALL, ASSERTIVE, successful man, 40, Bristol/London, seeks a naughty younger woman to enjoy the longer evenings with. I enjoy life to the full; film, theatre, travel, eating out and eating in, laughter and the rich tapestry of life. If you would like a fun relationship with some spice then please write to me with your telephone number to Box 4370.

NAUGHTY, BUSY MAN wants to spoil naughty fit girl. Take her in hand and then make her laugh – a Spring tonic and more fun than the gym! Box 3171.

PROFESSIONAL MALE, 55, seeks lady, 45-55 for friendship/marriage. London. Box 2871.

WEALTHY, SPORTY, 6'2" single male with GSOH, 51, that loves sun, sea, beaches and outdoors – requires gorgeous, busty, slim-hipped, petite woman under 35, who may be orally inclined, to spoil and pamper. Location unimportant but photo and tel no. would be appreciated. Box 2671.

SUGAR DADDY, South Devon – 60, tall, fit, solvent, unattached, house overlooking sea, into sailing, jazz and other old fashioned pursuits – seeks sugar plum 35-55 for occasional Devon weeks or business visits to Med. Box 2571.

EDUCATED, 23 YEAR OLD female, desires guy 25-32. Must be able to charm grandma. No emotional cripples or weirdoes. (London), photo please. Box 2471.

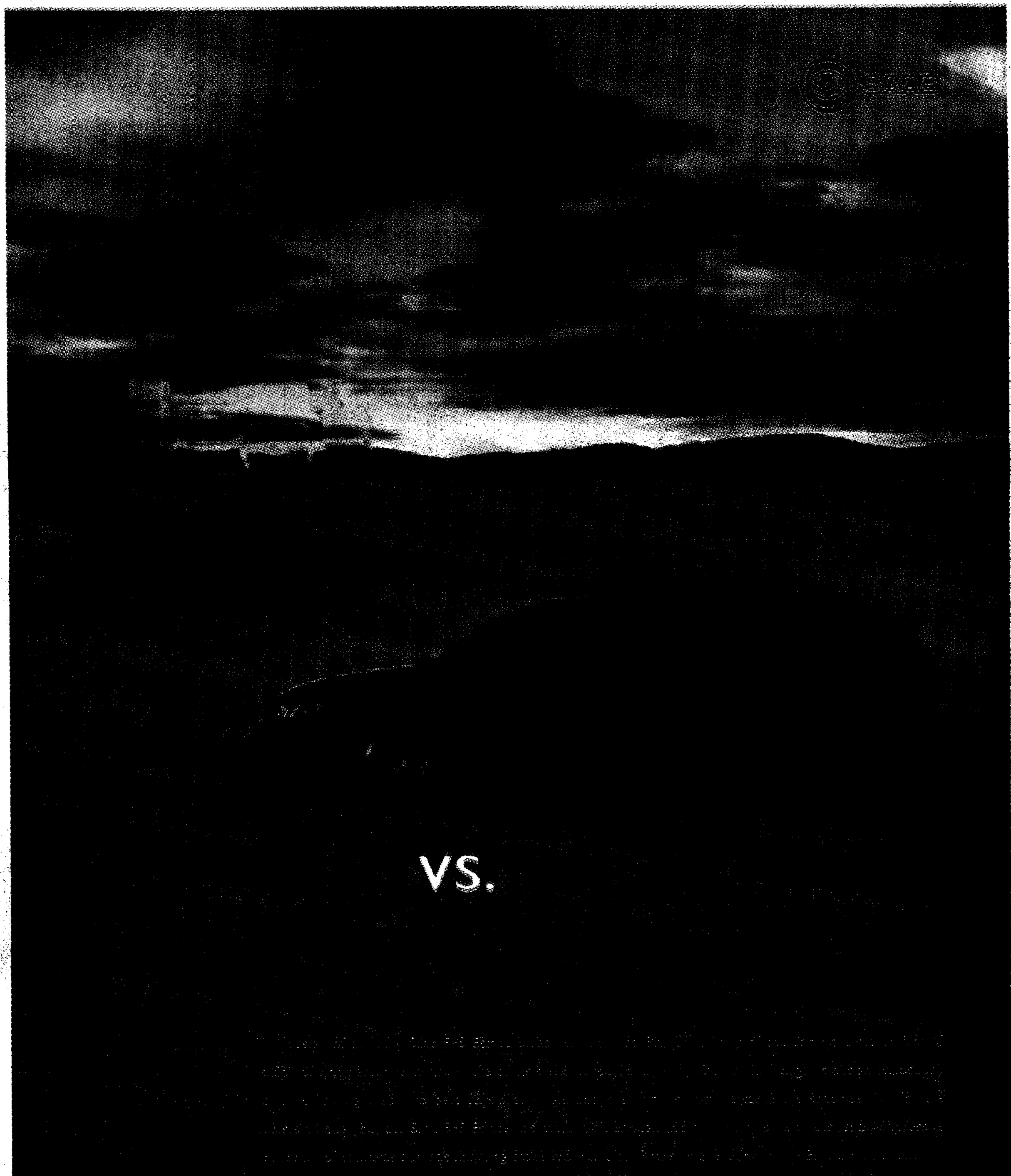
FREE ACCOMMODATION offered to caring sensual female to revive tall attractive N/S professional (mid-40s) with GSOH. N. London. Box 2271.

WOULD YOU LIKE more passion in your life? Nice, normal man, 38, GSOH, N/S, in celibate relationship WLTM similar woman 30-45 for occasional liaisons. Box 2071.

OLDER PROFESSIONAL man, educated, very wide interests – seeks passionate affair with lady, mature (say 55-65), who is both sensual and cerebral. We "Oldies" like it too – and I am a randy bastard! London area. Box 2371.

EYE SOLDIER

TALL, BLONDE, university lecturer, F, 31, into dancing and horseriding, seeks friendly services officer for erotic friendship and nocturnal sorties. Box 1571.



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